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KAVANAGH

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

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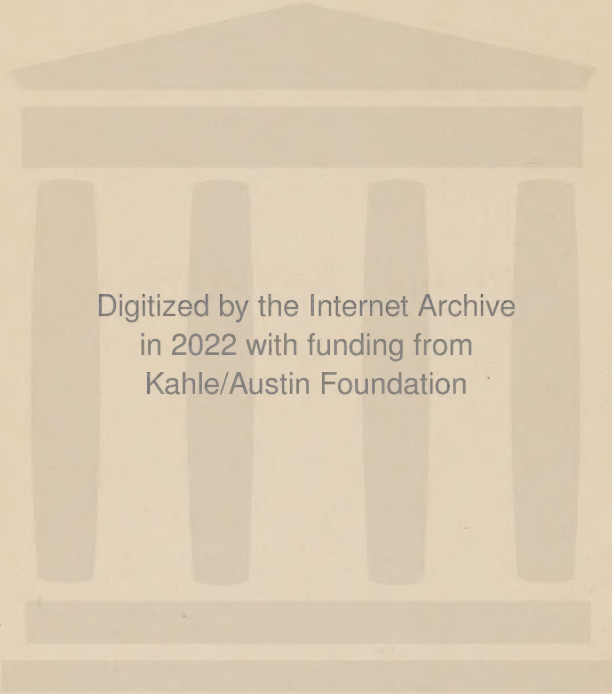


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BENEDICT KAVANAGH

BY

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

AUTHOR OF

"GENERAL JOHN REGAN," "SPANISH GOLD," ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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TAIRGIM AN LEABHAR SO DOM' MHNAOI.
NÍ HÉ GO MEASAIM GUR FIÚ É A
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THUAIRIM NACH SGRÍOBHFAINN É AR
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TO MY IRISH READERS

SHORTLY after the publication of my last novel I received a letter from a wise friend who had read the book. 'They will blast your Hyacinth,' he wrote, 'by setting its roots in a Seething Pot.' The prophecy was half fulfilled. The roots were set in a pot seething with acrimonious controversy. But the plant itself survived. It even benefited by the treatment. The outpourings of angry men were not unlike a fertiliser, unsavoury to handle, but beneficial to the life of the plant. I myself was much gratified by the abuse poured upon my books. I suffered for a short time from a fear that I had been guilty of exaggerating the grotesqueness of the baser side of Irish life. I now know that neither I nor anyone else could be guilty of such exaggeration.

But there is another side of Irish life which is not base. The controversy over my books has helped me to realise more clearly than ever before how fine a love of liberty, how broad a tolerance for honest opinion, there is among Irishmen of to-day. In papers which represent the opposite poles of opinion my books were dealt with freely and critically. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* and the *United Irishman*, the *Northern Whig* and the *Irish Peasant*, are miles apart from each other in policy. The writers of their reviews and articles were all of them out of sympathy with much that I wrote. But they and many others admitted frankly the principle that an author should have freedom to express his opinions. Private letters—many of them from people whom I do not know—

convinced me still more of the respect for liberty that there is among us. Two of these correspondents pointed out to me that a small number of young men were actually enlisted in Dublin for the Boer service, and went from Dublin straight to the Transvaal; that these were honourable men, not forgers like the Captain Quin in my *Hyacinth*, nor deserters like his follower. I knew, of course, that there was an Irish brigade in the Boer army. Of it or its leaders I wrote nothing either good or bad. I did not know that any Irishmen were enlisted in Dublin, and went from Dublin to fight for the Boers. I am sincerely sorry that the description of my purely imaginary Captain Quin should have seemed to cast a slur on the character and motives of these young men.

My description of the convent factory of 'Robeen' has been applied by some of my critics to the Providence Mills at Foxford. My 'Robeen' is not Foxford; nor, as these same critics somewhat illogically pointed out, is my convent the least like the Foxford Convent. Still, I see now that in certain particulars the circumstances of my 'Robeen' were too like those of the Foxford factory. I think it right, therefore, to state now that I believe the Foxford factory to have been started with a philanthropic and not a commercial motive, and that the wages paid in this factory are probably not below the standard usual in Connaught. Whether, even under the peculiar circumstances of the place, it was right to spend large sums of public money in subsidising a business which, if successful, must come into competition, and does, as a matter of fact, compete in the open market, with other unsubsidised Irish commercial undertakings, is a question which my critics, perhaps wisely, did not discuss, and which I therefore feel no need of touching here.

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

CHAPTER I

THE room in which Benedict Kavanagh lay dying was not squalid. It was, what for purposes of picturesque narrative is much worse, commonplace. There is a scenic fitness under certain circumstances about an attic, bare of furniture, draught-swept from broken window and tottering door, lit by guttering candle, filthy from floor to ragged bed coverlet. There could be no such fitness under any circumstances about this commonplace bedroom of a cheap Dublin lodging-house. The floor was more than half covered with a cheap carpet, whose originally abominable colouring had faded or worn to an unobtrusive drab. The paint on the wash-handstand was chipped off in places, but a decent basin and jug stood on it. The bedstead was an iron one, and its paint also had peeled and chipped off in small patches. A mattress of woven wire, visible now beneath the tossed blankets, gave promise of a certain comfort in repose. There were two chairs, sound chairs with cane seats, and a chest of drawers with a looking-glass on top of it served as a dressing-table. Its drawers shut very imperfectly, and were hard to open without upsetting the looking-glass. A lamp stood on a small table beside the bed, a cheap lamp, through the bowl of which the oil oozed, making a damp surface, so that tiny black insects crawling to the light stuck there and died. A small fire burnt in the grate feebly, as if somewhat ashamed of being there. It is not often that a bedroom fire is lit in a second-rate Dublin lodging-house. For the most part only students,

solicitors' apprentices, and candidates for bank clerkships rent such rooms, and they are content to slip cold into their beds. But Benedict Kavanagh lay dying, and the landlady, though she knew nothing of his history, or how in his way he had been a famous man, recognised that the approach of death brings privileges, and that a man very near to the great change deserves exceptional treatment. She had suspected ever since he took the rooms that Benedict Kavanagh was a dying man. She became certain of it when Nurse Davis came to look after him. A thrill of awed excitement moved her when the doctor, departing after his visit about six o'clock, told her that the man was not likely to see the light of another day.

The landlady was a good woman and kindly. She went to the bedroom, and took away with her the little boy who played with a broken toy-boat on the rug before the fire.

'It's no place for him to spend the night,' she whispered to the nurse. 'I'll mind him.'

She took him in her arms—he was no more than four years old—and carried him to her own sitting-room. There she gave him a basin full of water, and let him sail the boat in it, looking at him tearfully, planning to put him into her own bed afterwards.

Nurse Davis sat beside the dying man and watched him. He lay in a stupor, noticing nothing, not even the departure of the boy. After a while she rose and stirred the fire. The noise roused him. He opened his eyes. His fingers twitched the bedclothes, and he breathed less heavily. The nurse came back to him and put a cup to his lips. He drank a little with evident effort, and then closed his eyes again. But he had not relapsed into his stupor. After a few minutes he spoke. The nurse bent over him, for his voice was weak.

'I suppose I am dying. Did the doctor say so?'

She nodded.

‘Am I likely to live till to-morrow?’

She shook her head.

For some time he lay silent as if exhausted. Then he spoke again, and this time his voice was stronger, and the nurse noticed that his fingers had ceased their rapid picking at the sheet, and lay still.

‘Send for a clergyman,’ he said.

Nurse Davis looked at him doubtfully.

‘A priest?’ she asked.

He appeared to hesitate for a moment. Then he said:

‘No; a Protestant.’

Nurse Davis was herself a Protestant. She wrote a note to a young clergyman, a Mr. Quigley, a cousin of her own, whom she knew well. The landlady’s servant was despatched with it, and the nurse sat down again to wait beside the dying man. He did not relapse into his stupor, but remained, apparently with an effort, in possession of his senses. At about seven o’clock there was a knock at the door of the room. Mr. Quigley entered, a young man, blue eyed, with a fair moustache. He greeted the nurse, and then came over to the bedside and drew a Testament from his pocket. Benedict Kavanagh looked at the nurse, and said, ‘Go away.’

When she had left the room he turned his eyes to Mr. Quigley.

‘Listen,’ he said, ‘and do not interrupt me, even if I stop. I shall go on again when I have got back strength enough. Do not argue with me about what I say, for I have no time to waste.’

‘I do not want you to talk to me about religion. I have no religion. I never had much. Now I have none. Am I clear? I have no belief whatever in any kind of religion or in the creed of any Christian sect.’

Mr. Quigley started. It was wholly inconceivable that any human being could be prepared to die without a vestige of faith of any kind. He leaped to the conclusion that the man was delirious. Benedict

Kavanagh seemed to understand what was passing in his mind.

'No,' he said; 'I am in possession of my senses as much as a dying man can be. I know what I am saying.'

Mr. Quigley began to speak, uttering hurried pleadings. Benedict Kavanagh's eyes glowed angrily. He seemed to gain strength suddenly.

'Do not interrupt me. I will not hear you talk religion to me. Listen, and I will make it plain to you why I will not. There is just one year in all my life which I look back to with perfect satisfaction. I lived that year in what you would call the worst kind of sin with a woman whom I loved. Ah! I loved her to the utmost, and I was altogether happy. So I think was she. Then the child was born—my boy. She was ill and frightened. She repented, so they called it. Priests came—men of your Church or some other Church, it makes no matter which. They terrified her and she died. Their God—your God if there is a God—took her from me. His priests—men like you—so worked on her that she would not see me at the end—not even to say good-bye. Now you know why I will not listen to your religion. I never at any time believed in it. Now I hate it.'

Mr. Quigley's forehead was wrinkled and the corners of his mouth drawn down with misery. The man's position was more awful than anything he had ever imagined. A sweat of agony broke out on his face. He longed to aid the soul which was perishing before his eyes, and yet he saw no way of doing anything. Then he took up his hat and turned towards the door.

'I shall go,' he said, 'and get an older man—a better man—one who will know what to say to you. I cannot stay and listen. Oh, my God!'

'Stop! There is no time. You must listen to me.'

Mr. Quigley, baffled and miserable, sat down again.

'I do not want your religion,' Benedict Kavanagh spoke with evident effort and great difficulty. 'I

hope I have made that plain enough to you. I want to know if you will take charge of my boy—put him into one of your orphanages. I believe you have such places. Feed him; educate him; give him some sort of start in life. I have no money—at least, not enough money to be any good—twenty pounds perhaps. If I had lived——’

He stopped exhausted, and for a little Mr. Quigley thought he would speak no more. But he recovered himself.

‘If I had lived I would have taken care of him. But now—tell me, can you, will you take care of him?’

‘But his relatives? I don’t know. I shall have to make inquiries. Has no one any right to claim him?’

‘I have no relatives. His mother’s will not want him. They do not know that he exists. But in any case I have rights over my own son. I have here a paper; feel for it under my pillow—yes, in that pocket-book. I drew it up a week ago when I first thought I was dying. It appoints a guardian to the boy. Fill in your name in the blank space. I will sign it.’

Mr. Quigley unfolded the paper which he had drawn from the pocket-book and read:

‘I, Benedict Kavanagh, some time a Member of Parliament——’

He paused and looked at the man on the bed before him. The name was perfectly familiar to him. A few years before it had been on the lips of every Irishman and most Englishmen. Benedict Kavanagh was one of the ablest followers of the great leader who had defied the traditions and outraged the dignity of the English Parliament; one of the men who had led a helpless peasantry in their struggle against apparently overwhelming odds. Benedict Kavanagh! It was a name spoken with spitting and a curse, or shouted with hoarse cheers—the name of a man passionately hated and as passionately loved. Mr. Quigley looked at him with amaze-

ment. He remembered now that Benedict Kavanagh had disappeared suddenly from public view. His voice had sounded loud, his personality bulked large in Irish politics. Then he had disappeared. There had been no scandal, no public explanation. In the heat of the struggle men had not stopped to ask what had become of him. And now this story had been told to him, and the man lay dying, and he was to take charge of a son, another Benedict Kavanagh.

Apparently the dying man guessed something of what was passing through his mind. He spoke again :

‘Never mind who I am or what I was. Will you do what I ask?’

‘Yes.’

Mr. Quigley filled his own name into the blank space on the paper he held in his hand. Then he called the nurse and the landlady. Benedict Kavanagh was raised in the bed. They put the pen into his hand. Very slowly and laboriously he traced the letters of his name. They laid him down again. His eyes were fixed on the paper. He watched intently while the nurse and then the landlady, dropping tears while she wrote, signed, witnessing his act. He watched Mr. Quigley dry the paper before the fire, fold it, and place it in his pocket.

‘Take the other papers,’ he said. ‘There are others in that book and in my bag. Keep them for the boy.’

Then with a deep sigh he closed his eyes and lay motionless. The landlady left the room. The nurse stood silent at the foot of the bed. Mr. Quigley knelt down and began to pray aloud. The dying man turned his head slightly, and there was an expression on his face partly of utter weariness, partly of irritation.

‘I wish,’ he whispered, ‘that you would go away and let me die in peace.’

‘I cannot,’ said Mr. Quigley—‘I cannot allow you to go into the other world without praying for you.’

You will not let me point out to you the way of salvation. I must at least intercede for you.'

He knelt on and prayed—first silently; then the words which his lips formed became audible. Then again he was silent. He twisted his hands together. His face became strangely drawn and contorted, but, as men's faces do under pressure of strong feeling, spiritualised. Again he prayed aloud, and the uttering of the words seemed to give him a relief from the tension of his struggle. An hour passed. The nurse, who had knelt down at the foot of the bed, rose stiffly and sat huddled on a chair near the fire. Mr. Quigley paused and pressed both hands upon his forehead. Then, drawing them apart, he wiped away the sweat that hung on it. He looked up. The expression on Benedict Kavanagh's face had wholly changed. The look of irritation had passed away. The lines worn by sorrow, pain, and passion were wholly smoothed away or softened. There was peace. Mr. Quigley rose from his knees and peered closely. The nurse came from her seat by the fire and stood beside him. Benedict Kavanagh was dead.

CHAPTER II

LADY BEAUFORD'S house in Fitzwilliam Square was a comfortable one, and the dinner-table, with old silver on it, and delicate china, was very pleasant to sit at. The dinner itself was good, and of the three people who sat down to it two—Canon Hamilton and Charles Beauford—appreciated the food and wine. Lady Beauford was careful to keep a good cook, and had money enough to buy the best delicacies which the Dublin markets offered. She was a busy woman, occupied daily with the management of charities, but while old Canon Hamilton spent his annual fortnight in her house she found time to look closely to the

details of her housekeeping, and gave thought, more than at other times, to her own dress. She had every reason to be satisfied with the result of her carefulness. Canon Hamilton enjoyed the dinners she planned for him, and appreciated the dignified beauty of the lady who decked herself with rare lace, costly silk, and even a little old jewellery to gratify his eyes.

The Canon was a clergyman of a type already becoming rare in the Church of Ireland in 1885. The younger son of a gentleman of some property in the North, he had been presented while still a young man to the living of Killard. There he ministered for many years to a parish inhabited by farmers, most of them Orangemen. He had passed through the storm of the disestablishment, and lived to view with horror the land war of the 'eighties and the struggle for Home Rule. He neither sought nor wished for any preferment, and was content to leave the management of the Church's affairs to men who liked making speeches and preparing balance-sheets. Once a year he came to Dublin and sat a silent, dignified figure in the Synod Hall at Christ Church. He was beginning to feel a little lonely now at synod time. Each year he missed some familiar face. A new generation guided the councils of the Church. New men fussed about the corridors, greeting each other heartily, him respectfully. New jokes were cracked in the luncheon-room—jokes he did not wholly understand, although he smiled at them. Still he was loth to resign his place, liking his annual visit to Lady Beauford's house.

Very long ago, Mr. Hamilton, then a fellow-commoner in Trinity College, had fallen in love with the beautiful eyes of Mary Naughton. Judge Naughton, a man of caustic wit and a keen lawyer, had welcomed the young man to his house, told him finely-flavoured stories, and mixed punch for him according to an old receipt; but he had not considered him an eligible suitor for Mary's hand.

Perhaps she had cared a little for him. But it was Captain Beauford, an Englishman, with his money and his brilliant prospects, who married her. Thirty-five years afterwards she returned to her native city, a widow, with the title her husband had won for her and the fortune he left her. Then it was too late for her to do more than make friends again with her old lover, by that time Canon Hamilton, but still unmarried.

Charles, Lady Beauford's only son, the third person at the dinner-table, was a young man of considerable ability, for whom common gossip prophesied a career at the Irish Bar not less brilliant than his grandfather's had been. He, like the Canon, enjoyed his dinner and his wine. He was quite conscious of the fact that the smooth comfort of his home became in a subdued way luxurious during one particular fortnight in the year. He noted with quiet amusement the little fineries which emphasised his mother's beauty. He was on excellent terms with Canon Hamilton, and seldom failed to carry to the library of the Four Courts some anecdotes, amusing indications of the outlook upon life of the class and generation who held the disestablishment of the Church to have been instigated by the devil, and found in the letters of the name Gladstone the number of the beast. For his mother he entertained a real affection and a deep respect. He thought her the finest lady in the world, but he deplored her fondness for charitable work. He did not think she ought to mix herself up too freely with some of the people who acted with her on committees. It irritated him to find the matron of a favourite orphanage drinking tea with his mother in a drawing-room. He particularly disliked Mr. Quigley, an energetic and pushing curate, who helped Lady Beauford in many ways. He was also of opinion that too much money ought not to be given in charities. A decent, even a generous, subscription should, he recognised, be credited to Lady Beauford on widely circulated reports of reputable

societies; but he did not approve of the giving of large sums in obscure ways. He was, however, a young man of considerable ability, destined to rise high, and he did not protest against his mother's way of spending what was her own, or try to reason her into saner views of the use of money.

Canon Hamilton, eyeing the fine colour of the claret in his glass, began to speak of a man whom Lady Beauford had known many years before.

'You remember him, a wild young fellow in those days. We breakfasted one day together in my rooms. There were others there, too. I do not know how it came about, but he undertook, making a bet about it, to walk from here to Cork without a penny in his pocket, begging for his food, and sleeping under hedges. Well, I met him yesterday, and he asked for you. He has been in India. Spent his life there serving the Queen. Now he comes back to a changed Ireland. He says they've been threatening to shoot him. He talks of forming a combination among the landlords, of taking the law into his own hands if the Government can't or won't protect him and his property. But he doesn't understand. The heart is gone out of our gentry.'

Then the parlourmaid entered and told Lady Beauford that Mr. Quigley was in the drawing-room and wished to speak to her. She rose. Her son spoke irritably.

'My dear mother, you really must not allow yourself to be disturbed at dinner-time. You spent the morning at the orphanage, and Mr. Quigley ought to be able to put the children to bed without consulting you about it.'

'Now, Charles'—she smiled as she spoke—'you know very well that Mr. Quigley has nothing to do with the orphanage except to catechise the children; and I'm sure he wouldn't have come at this hour unless for something very important.'

She turned to the parlourmaid, as if she expected some confirmation of her opinion—a report, perhaps,

of a wildness in Mr. Quigley's eye, or a savage determination in his manner.

'He seems to have a little boy with him, my lady,' said the maid.

'There! I told you it was something important. He has found the child somewhere, perhaps starving, and wants me to give him a note to the matron of the orphanage. I'll go to him at once.'

Canon Hamilton rose and held the door open for her while she left the room.

'I detest that man Quigley,' said Charles Beauford.

The Canon looked at him, a mild interrogation on his face. Charles justified himself.

'He's not a gentleman—not the kind of man one is accustomed to meet and talk to.'

'Perhaps not,' said the Canon; 'but he seems to be a very zealous young clergyman. Very much in earnest about his work.'

'That's another thing about him I don't like. He's too zealous. He talks nothing but his own kind of shop. When my mother has him here to dinner—and she does very often—he talks about drunkards and hospitals and people's souls. He quotes texts in ordinary conversation. I call it bad form myself. Now, if I were to discuss nothing but points of law, I should be regarded as intolerable. I don't see why a clergyman should be treated differently.'

'Well, you see, Charles, a clergyman is different. A clergyman is never off duty. Some Bishop said that, and it's true. At least, he never ought to be off duty.'

The Canon sighed. His own dinner-table conversation was not garnished with texts, nor did he discuss the rescue of drunkards. Direct mention of souls he shrank from, though not because he had any doubts about their importance. He did not talk as Mr. Quigley did, being naturally silent on matters which moved him deeply; but he was inclined to admire

Mr. Quigley, and to reckon his own reticence a fault to be overcome.

The parlourmaid re-entered the room with the news that Lady Beauford would be grateful if Canon Hamilton would join her in the drawing-room. Charles shrugged his shoulders.

'I shall go down to my own den and smoke,' he said. 'That man Quigley will probably keep you there talking till the middle of the night.'

The scene in the drawing-room surprised Canon Hamilton. A small boy sat on the hearthrug, wide-eyed, fear on his face, tears imminent. Mr. Quigley, a hot, untidy, puzzled guardian angel, stood over him. Lady Beauford sat under the lamp. She had turned her back on her visitors. A paper lay unfolded on her lap. Her face was covered with her hands. The Canon saw her shoulders shaken by a sob.

'I came,' said Mr. Quigley, 'to ask Lady Beauford to give me an order for admission to the orphanage for this child. The case is a peculiar one, and somewhat pressing. But I am afraid I have done wrong in coming to-night. She'—he looked over towards Lady Beauford—'seems to be very much upset. I fear she is ill. Perhaps I had better take the boy away again. I can keep him in my lodgings for to-night and come again to-morrow. What do you think?'

The Canon walked across the room and took the paper which lay on Lady Beauford's lap in his hand.

'Has this anything to do with the case?'

'It has,' said Mr. Quigley—'certainly it has. It is the father's will. He has made me the child's guardian. I have just explained to Lady Beauford how it all happened. The child is apparently illegitimate. The father was a remarkable man.' Mr. Quigley went on with his story. The Canon listened to him with close attention. Then he read the paper carefully. When he had finished it he went across the room and sat down beside Lady Beauford. He touched her arm, and then took one of her hands in his and held it.

‘ My poor friend ! ’ he said—‘ my poor friend ! ’

Mr. Quigley was not a man of fine sensibility, and he was intensely curious about what was going on before him. He did not understand either Lady Beauford’s emotion or Canon Hamilton’s words. But he wanted to understand. He drew back from the fire and stood in the shadow near the door. No one had asked him to go away, and he felt at liberty to stay. At first he gained nothing in the way of knowledge. The two old people sat side by side, the Canon murmuring little comfortable phrases of sympathy and pity. Then the child on the hearth-rug, thoroughly frightened, began to cry. Lady Beauford rose quickly and went over to him. She sat down on the rug and lifted the boy on to her knees. She put her arms round him and pressed him close to her. She swayed softly to and fro talking broken baby talk to the boy and kissing his hair until he stopped crying and, as a child does, dropped suddenly asleep. Then she looked up at the Canon, who stood beside her.

‘ Well ? ’ she said, and there was a sort of challenge in her voice. ‘ What do you say ? ’

‘ It is the hand of God,’ said the Canon. ‘ It is most wonderful, beyond anything we could have imagined, and most beautiful. No doubt the Good Shepherd has given you this lost lamb of His to keep for Him. It is strange that he should be brought just to you of all women in the world. Yet why should we call it strange ? It must have been the most simple thing for God to do. It was right, of course, that you should be the one to have the child.’

Lady Beauford withdrew one of her arms from the boy. She reached up and took Canon Hamilton’s hand in hers. Her eyes were full of tears when they met his. He thought that never, not even in the old days, when the eyes were bright with laughter, and the face, now wrinkled, round and full ; when the grey hair was brown and lustrous—not even then had she been so beautiful.

'I might have known,' she said, 'that you would feel as I do. And yet for a moment I was afraid. You know what things people will begin to say.'

'You and I,' said the Canon, 'serve a Master Who did not greatly concern Himself about men's judgments of what He said and did. Would He have refused to take the child in His arms? Would He not have welcomed her too, just as you would, I am sure, if she were to come to you?'

'Poor Mary!'

Then there was silence for a while. The child stirred in his sleep, nestling closer against the woman's breast. She bent her head over him and touched his hair gently with her lips and cheek.

'Shall I go down and tell Charles?' asked the Canon. 'He ought to know. Indeed, he must know if you are going to keep the child.'

'Bring him here,' she said. 'It is better that he should be told in my presence.'

CHAPTER III

GOING to the door the Canon saw Mr. Quigley, and started. He had forgotten the man's presence, and was not well pleased to think that there had been a listener to his talk with Lady Beauford.

'Ah!' he said. 'You are still here, Mr. Quigley. I thought you had gone.'

'I did not like to go and leave the child. I thought you might want me to take him to the orphanage.'

'No, no; we will manage about the child; I will be responsible for him. You had better go away. You see that Lady Beauford is somewhat upset, so you will excuse my sending you away. We are very grateful to you for bringing the child here—very grateful. But it is better for you not to stay any longer.'

Mr. Quigley departed, turning over in his mind Benedict Kavanagh's confession, and trying to piece into some connection with it the words which Lady Beauford and the Canon had spoken.

After seeing him to the door, the Canon went back into the drawing-room. Lady Beauford had risen from the rug and seated herself on a chair. She still held the sleeping child in her arms.

'How much of Mary's story does Charles know?'

'I have never spoken to him on the subject,' she replied; 'but I think he must know it all. These secrets are never really kept. Of course, he was only a schoolboy at Cheltenham when she was married, and afterwards when—when—afterwards he was in college. It is possible that he does not know. Perhaps I ought to have told him. Indeed, I meant to tell him some day, but it is a very hard thing for a mother to tell her son about his sister.'

The Canon, returning with Charles, looked at Lady Beauford. Her eyes signalled to him that he should tell the story.

'Charles,' he said, 'a very strange thing has happened to-night. Your mother wishes me to tell you and to consult you about what it is right to do. First, I must ask you whether you know the story of your sister's life.'

Charles's eyes became suddenly keen and hard. The subject was evidently a deeply unpleasant one to him.

'I know,' he said, 'that she married a man who had some property in the South of England. I believe that the marriage was not a happy one. He was a drunkard, and ill-treated her. That was while I was at school. Then my father died, and my mother came back to live in Dublin. I have never seen my sister since.'

'Is that all you know?'

'That is all I *know*. I have heard more. I have heard a very scandalous story; but I am not sure that I believe it. I hope it is not true.'

‘ You heard, perhaps, that your sister left her husband and lived in France with another man ? ’

‘ That is what I heard ; and after that ? ’

‘ We know nothing except that she died. Mary never wrote to her mother. Her husband professed to know no more than we did. The man with whom she went away declined to hold any communication with either your mother or me about her. ’

‘ The whole thing is a horrible scandal, much better forgotten. Why have you repeated it to me to-night ? ’

‘ Charles, ’ said Lady Beauford, speaking for the first time since her son entered the room, ‘ this is Mary’s child. ’

‘ Do you mean that it is the child of the man—the man for whom she left her husband ? ’

‘ Yes, ’ said the Canon. ‘ He has been brought here by a very wonderful series of chances—I would rather say by the hand of Providence. Your mother wishes to keep him, and I think she will be doing what is right. ’

‘ What evidence have you that this is my sister’s child ? ’

The Canon repeated Mr. Quigley’s story and handed the paper which Mr. Quigley had brought to Charles. There seemed no room to doubt that the dead man was Benedict Kavanagh, for whose sake Mary had sacrificed her honour and her home. Charles summed up the evidence rapidly. His keen mind was trained to deal with such matters. He saw where a lawyer, defending a property against a claimant, might place his finger on weak points in the story. He saw also that it was almost certain that his mother was right in calling the child on her knee Mary’s child.

‘ I mean to keep him, ’ said Lady Beauford, ‘ and bring him up as if he were legally, what he is really, my grandchild. ’

Charles raised his eyebrows, and a faint smile hovered on his thin lips.

‘I am sure that such an intention is very fine—so fine as to be, perhaps, quixotic. Still, I hope you will forgive me for saying this, you are evidently somewhat unnerved to-night. It is not to be wondered at. Do not you think it would be well to postpone any discussion, any final decision, until to-morrow?’

Something—a coolness, a reasonableness, a suggestion of superiority in the young man’s tone—stung Canon Hamilton.

‘I do not think,’ he said, that *I* am in any way unnerved or excited, and I agree with your mother that what she proposes to do is right.’

‘Have you considered that you will set all Dublin talking about an old and particularly disgraceful scandal? You do not wish, surely, to have my sister’s story discussed in every club?’

‘I am sure,’ said Lady Beauford, ‘that I have a duty to this child. I must not allow myself to be frightened out of doing it by the thought of what people will say.’

‘Of course, mother, of course. Don’t suppose that I want you to put the child in the workhouse. There are schools in England and elsewhere, excellent schools to which such children can be sent. Send him to one of them. Pay for him, clothe him, educate him. Give him a good start in life. I do not wish to do anything but what is kind and good. I only wish to save you from a very useless piece of quixotism, from doing what will not really be the best thing for the boy.’

‘Remember, Charles,’ said the Canon, ‘Mary was your mother’s only daughter. Think how she loved her, of the heart-break of losing her. Think that now she is dead and has left this child behind her. Try and realise that your mother already loves the boy.’

‘I cannot help also realising that the boy is the son of a consummate scoundrel. I am not speaking simply of his conduct to my sister. Apart from that

altogether Benedict Kavanagh was a blackguard. He was one of the worst, because one of the ablest, of the gang of politicians who have plunged this country into an abyss of abominable crime. The deaths of the gentlemen who are murdered and the deaths of the unfortunate peasants who are hanged for murdering them ought to be laid to the charge of men like Benedict Kavanagh. You cannot, simply cannot, wish my mother to acknowledge that man's son as her grandson.'

The Canon hesitated. His political creed taught him to regard the people's leaders in the land war as just such men as Charles Beauford described. He had himself used words like Charles's words in speaking about them. But, then, they had been remote from him—forces, not men. Now he shrank from such fierce judgment of one who had, as it were, come into touch with him. There flashed on him a picture of the lonely deathbed, the broken, helpless man in his extremity, the last torturing anxiety about the boy. The Christian in him revolted against the politician. He answered Charles sternly.

'Kavanagh is dead and gone to his account. You and I need judge him no more.'

'And Mary is dead too,' said Lady Beauford, 'and this is her child—your own sister's child, Charles.'

No doubt she could if she chose have simply declared her will to her son. The house she lived in was her own. The money she spent was her own absolutely. Charles lived with her and for the most part on her. With all his brilliant prospects he was not yet earning very much. It was therefore hers to choose what she would do and his to submit to what he had no power to prevent. Yet she pleaded with him, appealed to him by her words, begged his approval with pathetically meek eyes. Charles was much moved by her words and looks. But he was absolutely certain that he was right in his contention, and determined to save his mother from an

act of folly. He waited some time before he spoke again, not because he hesitated about pressing his opposition, but in order to be sure of selecting the strongest arguments.

‘It is,’ he said at last—‘it is—I am sure you will believe me—with extreme reluctance that I place another aspect of the question before you. It is not pleasant for me to have to say this, and I think it might have occurred to you’—he looked at Canon Hamilton as he spoke—‘if not to my mother, without my suggesting it. I think that I ought to be considered before this arrangement is made. I have my career before me. How will this nephew of mine affect my position and my prospects? Will it be pleasant for me to live in Dublin society with this child of Benedict Kavanagh’s growing up in the house with me? A scandal of this sort affects even a man’s work. It clings to him, is whispered here and there and everywhere. I have my hopes and ambitions. I look high and aim high. Is it fair that I should be handicapped at the start through no fault of my own?’

So far he spoke to Canon Hamilton. Then he turned to Lady Beauford.

‘And you know, mother, of something else—of the marriage that I have set my heart on. You yourself approve of my wish. How will Lord Telltown like to let his daughter marry me under these new circumstances? Will it be pleasant for her to live in the house with this boy—and you remember that you yourself suggested our living here—eat with him, talk with him, have him perhaps as playmate for her own children? You know Lord Telltown; how, with all his queerness, he is enormously proud of his family and name. You know Eva. Can you suppose that she would tolerate such a thing?’

‘I think,’ said the Canon slowly, ‘that Charles is—that Charles has made his case. I do not say that his is the highest and noblest way of looking at a matter of this kind. Still, Charles is a man of

the world. I am not. I understand that from the point of view of a man of the world he is right. It will cost you something. It will be a sacrifice to you to give up the child. But I think it is a sacrifice that you are bound to make since he demands it.'

'What am I to do, then?' asked Lady Beauford—
'what am I to do with the boy?'

It was to Canon Hamilton she spoke. She already knew what her son's advice would be. There were schools in England and elsewhere to which such children could be sent. She could pay for him and secure him a good start in life. But she shrank painfully from the thought of sending this child, who clung to her in his sleep, who had already found a way into her love, to live, a dishonoured waif, among strangers who would care for no more than the fees she paid for him.

'If you will allow me,' said the Canon, 'if you will trust me, I should like to take the boy home with me and bring him up as if he were my own. We are very old friends, Mary. I have always had for you a feeling which it is no harm now to call love. I have never had wife nor child of my own. May I have your grandchild to be my Benjamin—the son of my right hand in my old age?'

The old lady rose tremulously from her chair. She laid the sleeping child down gently and crossed the room. Then, with a strange mingling of dignity and humility, she took Canon Hamilton's hand, stooped over it and kissed it.

'I thank God,' she said, 'for many things, but most of all because He has given me the friendship of a good man.'

Charles watched the little scene with kindly tolerance and a certain admiration. He had gained his point. The rectory of Killard was remote enough from the Dublin Four Courts. The appearance of a child bearing the name of Benedict Kavanagh might be a nine days' wonder in the parish and the neighbourhood. It would not affect Charles Beauford's

career or blight the prospect of his alliance with Lord Telltown's daughter. He was in no way vexed at his mother's sentimental behaviour. He was even a little grateful that there were men in the world so devoid of common-sense as to saddle themselves with the care of stray waifs who might otherwise be troublesome.

Curiously enough, Canon Hamilton, he did not clearly understand why, felt himself impelled to offer some sort of apology to the young man.

'You see, Charles,' he said—and there was no suggestion of irony in his tone—'it is easy for me. I have no career to be spoiled.'

Charles in his turn could speak generously.

'I am sure that you think very badly of me, Canon Hamilton. But, believe me, I have urged nothing but what I know to be wise and right. I shall always take an interest in the boy. In the future you can count on me to do my very best for him in every way in my power. When the time comes for giving him a start in life I shall take care that he has a good one. It will be his own fault, not mine, and certainly not yours, if he does not take his place in the world as a gentleman.'

He meant every word he said; and Canon Hamilton, knowing the young man, trusted him.

CHAPTER IV

It is written: 'He who findeth a wife findeth a good thing.' There may be exceptions to this. According to the teaching of some novelists and playwrights, a wife is anything but a blessing. But these are moderns, and truth comes from old time. Moreover, none of the men who disparage the ancient saying have had such experience as the man who made it. He, if anyone, ought to have known

about the matter. It is folly to dispute the judgment of the man who generalises from an enormous number of experiments.

Certainly when Charles Beauford found a wife he found a good thing. It is pleasant and satisfying for a rising barrister to see his wife's name, with the prefix 'honourable' attached to it, printed in the lists of those who are present at functions in Dublin Castle and dinners at the Viceregal Lodge. It is also profitable. Work and the fees which reward work tend to flow towards the man who is well known and whose reputation stands high. Charles Beauford's reputation stood very high, partly because Charles Beauford had brains, partly also because the Honourable Mrs. Beauford took her place in the most exclusive circles of Dublin society. Such a wife is certainly a good thing.

It is also pleasant for a rising barrister—indeed, for any man with eyes in his head—to enjoy the exclusive ownership of a beautiful woman. Charles Beauford was a man of taste. He liked to be surrounded with old furniture, good prints, and to handle well-bound books. Mrs. Beauford was an exceedingly decorative person. She had a fine figure, an attractive face, and a rare taste in dressing herself. She looked well, high bred, entirely satisfying to the most fastidious. And she looked well everywhere—that is to say, not literally everywhere, because there were some situations in which it was impossible to imagine her ever being placed; but in any ordinary place—in a ball-room, at the head of a dinner-table, at a garden party, or in the privacy of her mother-in-law's house, where she and Charles spent the first years of their married life.

It is a further advantage to a man—at least, to a man like Charles Beauford—to marry a cultivated and intelligent woman. For Charles himself was an educated man. He heard good music with pleasure, appreciated good pictures, read some old books and a great many new ones, could talk well, wrote a

paper now and then for a magazine, and occasionally even thought a little. Eva Beauford knew quite enough about music, pictures and books to be companionable. She had, besides, a love for poetry, especially minor poetry, for the lyrics of those who just miss immortality. This added a tenderness, a charm not easily definable, to her culture. Charles himself did not care for poetry. But he valued the note of elevation in his wife's mind in much the same way as he appreciated the fine flavour of rare wine.

And she really liked her husband. She thought him very clever, which was true; very kind, which was also true; and very honourable, which, if one accepts the ordinary standards of honour as satisfactory, was true enough. This is a minor matter; still, the affectionate admiration of a wife adds to a man's pleasure, and convinces him that in finding her he has found a good thing.

But to almost every wife, even the most perfect, there is some drawback. One woman has sisters of an irritating kind who come and stay with her after she is married. Another has objectionable brothers who borrow money. Most, according to the popular belief, have odious mothers. Eva Beauford had a father. Lord Telltown, considered as a father-in-law, had many advantages. He was a peer, and the head of an old and honourable family. He sat in the House of Lords, and was supposed to possess great influence with all respectable—that is to say, Conservative—Governments. He was rich, in comparison to most Irish peers. But he was an intolerable bore. Charles Beauford, like most clever men, hated being bored. Lord Telltown frequently came to Dublin to transact business of one kind or another. He also frequently passed through Dublin on his way to London. It was understood that on all such occasions he dined with the Beaufords. Sometimes he also spent the afternoon with them. Then Charles suffered greatly, for Lord Telltown was a bore of no ordinary ability.

In the first place, he was intensely interested in

theology. This, of course, is an innocent and even praiseworthy taste if kept within proper bounds. But Lord Telltown's delight was in obscure parts of Holy Scripture, and the natural originality of his mind led to his becoming more and more heterodox, until he was connected with the Church of his baptism by no tie except the payment of an annual subscription. His acts of worship were performed, when he was at home, in a disused hay-loft, where he preached a highly concentrated form of Christianity to his household servants on Sunday afternoon. He loved to demonstrate to Charles Beauford strange theories of salvation.

Next to theology in Lord Telltown's mind came politics. Indeed, the two subjects shaded off into each other, and occasionally got confused. He believed that Protestantism and Unionism were one and the same thing, viewed from different standpoints. Protestants were necessarily Unionists, and Unionist Governments existed for the purpose of supporting Irish Protestants. It irritated him when facts did not square with his theories. Occasionally ill-regulated Protestants in the North got angry with Conservative statesmen, and said nasty things of them. Frequently Unionist Governments did things which were not to the advantage of Protestantism. Then Lord Telltown reviewed the situation with an air of puzzled disgust, feeling much as a mathematician might if he discovered that every now and then a triangle turned up somewhere one side of which was longer than the other two together. Charles Beauford was of course a Unionist. A rising barrister with aristocratic connections cannot, without offensive eccentricity, be anything else. But he was not a fool. He quite understood that Irish Protestants are a source of the greatest trouble and annoyance to Unionist statesmen, who therefore dislike them very much. But it was quite impossible to explain this to Lord Telltown, who prosed naïvely about loyalty, freedom, the principles of the Reformation, and similar matters, until

Charles Beauford's muscles twitched with the weariness of long endurance.

The passage of years did not mitigate the suffering caused by Lord Telltown's visits. Sometimes, if he got due notice, Charles invited other men to meet his father-in-law at dinner. But often he had no time to secure a buffer guest, for Lord Telltown arrived without warning. There was one terrible occasion about ten years after his marriage when Charles returned home to find the old gentleman seated in the drawing-room. Mrs. Beauford and her two children were away from home. Charles realised that he would have to face unaided six weary hours of conversation.

Lord Telltown began very much as usual. He had an ingenious and entirely novel theory about the condition of the blessed departed founded on the interpretation of some remarks made by the prophet Ezekiel. The exposition of his view occupied a little more than an hour. He then passed on to speculate about the attitude of Conservative statesmen towards the Catholic University question. Charles, without committing himself to a statement of his own opinion, suggested that it might be worth the while of a Government, for the sake of peace and quietness, to endow a University which would satisfy the Bishops. Lord Telltown was indignant at the mere suggestion of such opportunist policy. He explained his conviction that English statesmen acted on principle, and that, therefore, any apparent approval of a University scheme could be nothing but a blind, intended to deceive the enemy. This subject also lasted for an hour.

Then Lord Telltown explained at some length a project for starting a new weekly paper. He proposed to edit it himself, and to check by means of its articles the insidious attempts, unfortunately too prevalent, to introduce ritualism into the Church of Ireland. He drew from his pocket estimates from various printers, and showed himself familiar with technical terms such as 'leaded type.' He lamented

the fact that all really good names seemed to be already discovered and appropriated by existing papers. He would have liked *The Guardian* or *The Sentinel*; but there already was a very famous *Guardian* and quite a regiment of *Sentinels* which had to be distinguished from each other by territorial names. *The Antisacerdotalist* appealed to him in some ways, but was too long. *The Refiner's Fire* was suggestive—he explained the symbolism carefully—but he did not approve of a secular use of scriptural phrases. *The Watchman*—what did Charles think of *The Watchman*? Or, better still, *The Watchman on the Hill*? Charles was not enthusiastic. 'You'll never make the thing pay,' he said.

'But I don't want it to pay. I'm quite content to lose a little money for the sake of a good cause. Besides, why shouldn't it pay? I shall have advertisements, of course. I've always heard that advertisements pay for the whole cost of producing a newspaper.'

Charles yawned, and glanced almost hopelessly at the clock. It struck seven, and simultaneously the dressing-gong sounded.

During dinner the subject of the new paper was dropped. It is not wise to discuss subjects of immense national importance before servants.

Afterwards Charles led the way to his study, lit a cigar, and pulled himself together, determined, if possible, to take command of the conversation. If garrulous Lord Telltown must ramble, it should at least not be through regions of his own choosing. Another two hours of talk about *The Watchman on the Hill* would be intolerable. Casting about rapidly for a subject, it occurred to Charles that if his father-in-law was still capable of taking an interest in anything except his own peculiar theology and ridiculous politics, it would be money. No man, unless he is actually the inmate of an asylum, can fail to be interested in money.

Speculators on the Dublin Stock Exchange were

just then immensely excited about a company which proposed to make and sell graphine. No one knew what graphine was used for or anything about it, except that the manufacture was carried on in Heligoland. Why the inhabitants of that island should have come to Dublin of all places in the world for money to develop their enterprise did not appear, but several very shrewd persons were of opinion that a lot of money might be made by temporarily owning graphine shares, which therefore became very difficult to obtain.

Lord Telltown displayed considerable interest in the matter, but felt it his duty to warn his son-in-law against rash speculation. Charles explained that his own stake in the company was small.

‘I got a straight tip at the start,’ he said, ‘and came in when the shares were very little above par. They have gone up ever since, and I could sell out now for four times what I gave for them. But I mean to hold on yet a bit.’

‘Do you think,’ said Lord Telltown, ‘that it would be worth my while to buy now? Will they go up much more? I should like to make a few hundreds, if possible, just at present. The initial expense of *The Watchman on the Hill* will be considerable. I want, if possible, to start the paper——’

All roads lead to Rome, and it appeared to Charles that all subjects of conversation would work back to the *Watchman*. But he did not yield without a struggle. He interrupted Lord Telltown ruthlessly.

‘Oh, we’d all like to make a few hundreds if we could. I’ve had a plan of my own in my mind for some time which I shall be able to carry out if this graphine business comes off properly. I have long wished to go into Parliament.’

‘Dear me! I wonder the idea of your doing so never occurred to me. Of course, you are the very sort of man we want in the House of Commons.’

‘Well, I’ve often thought it over, but the fact is I’ve never been able to put my hand on the necessary

money. Eva and I are very comfortable and all that, but it's one thing to keep going, and quite another to be able to put down fifty pounds here and fifty pounds there in subscriptions to things, besides the expenses of the election itself. The seat I have in my mind at present is up in the North, and the people there are always wanting to build new Orange halls and schools and things. Of course, I should have to pay up.'

'Why not stand for the University? I should think you'd find it pretty cheap. Your name would carry the votes of all the country parsons. They have such a respect for your mother.'

'Yes, I should like that well enough. There would be less worry with one's constituents there than anywhere else. Unfortunately, there's not likely to be a vacancy. Old Jephson won't resign. I really don't know why, for he gets no good out of the seat. If it's making speeches he likes, he might as well do it outside Parliament and leave the seat vacant for a man who'd make a proper use of it. However, there's no good talking about that. The seat I have in my mind is Ainsley's. He's talking of retiring ever since he came in for his brother's property. Besides, he rather did for himself with the Orangemen and Presbyterians by marrying that actress woman. She smokes cigarettes at railway stations, swears in a friendly way at her servants, and does other things which outrage the Northern conscience. I don't believe they'd elect Ainsley again, even if he stood, and he probably doesn't want to. Why should he, now he's got the property and the baronetcy? He can't expect to be made a peer.'

'I suppose you can manage to get nominated or selected, or whatever they call it, by the local Conservative Association?'

'Oh yes, I hope so. I shall subscribe, as I said, to the building of a couple of Orange halls. I shall send the money through Canon Hamilton. He's a sort of high priest of the Orangemen in those parts, you

know. I shall invite the local clergy to dinner whenever I hear of their being in Dublin. I shall go down some twelfth of July, and make them a speech. Canon Hamilton will ask me if I give him a hint.'

'Dear me! How interesting! Do you know I've never come across an Orangeman. Living down in Munster, one doesn't, you know. Aren't they rather—rather *farouche*? What will you say to them?'

'Oh, I don't know. The usual thing, I suppose. Tell them to rally round the old flag and stand firm by the cause for which their fathers bled and died; fling an insult at the Pope, and assure them that they are the finest fellows in Great Britain or out of it. That is what's expected on these occasions.'

Lord Telltown was somewhat shocked. He disliked flippancy on serious subjects, and the existence of the Pope was in his opinion a very grave public scandal.

'I hope you'll be serious, Charles. In these days a grave responsibility rests on——'

'Oh, I'll be serious enough. You don't suppose Canon Hamilton would allow me to crack jokes about the Protestant religion, even if I wanted to.'

'You might throw in a word of warning about the insidious attempts to introduce ritualism into the Church of Ireland.'

'I will. I'm sure they'd like that. You shall put me up to all the latest tips on the subject.'

'I'll send you my new paper. I mean to make the exposure of Romanising tendencies a special feature of it. By the way, talking of *The Watchman on the Hill*——'

Charles sighed. There was still an hour to be got through before he could with any decency go to bed, and he foresaw that he would be unable to escape from the fascinating topic any more. Lord Telltown explained an elaborate scheme for attracting advertisers and readers. The idea, he said, had occurred to him quite suddenly in bed.

'This is the age of coupons. You must have noticed, Charles, how every successful paper supplies its readers with coupons. Now, I presume to give a coupon with every number. Anyone who collects, say, six coupons can send them to me, and get in exchange a voucher entitling him to five per cent. discount on any article bought from one of the advertisers in the paper. The idea, I flatter myself, is entirely novel. It cuts both ways, or rather all three ways. It immensely gratifies my readers, it brings me in a number of advertisements, and it practically guarantees business to my advertisers.'

Charles was amazed at the sudden flash of shrewdness. He didn't in the least believe that such a wild-cat scheme would work out in any profitable way, but he began to think that his father-in-law was not such a fool as to run a paper without at least trying to make money out of it.

'I see,' he said; 'and the advertiser, of course, puts on the five per cent. before he takes it off, while the reader is led to believe that he is getting the price of his paper back every time he buys a piece of soap or a box of pills.'

Lord Telltown frowned.

'I have no intention,' he said, 'of swindling the public. I suppose a man may become the proprietor of a weekly paper without ceasing to be a gentleman.'

Charles had not the least wish to argue the point. Lord Telltown recovered his temper, and went on amiably:

'I shall give you the warm support of *The Watchman on the Hill*. I shall get a local man to write about the position of parties down there. I shall have a series of articles on the duty of Protestant representatives at the present crisis. We have been too weak-kneed in the past. We have compromised and allowed ourselves to be browbeaten. The English people don't really understand our position in this country. But I am convinced, Charles, that you are a sound man. I feel that we can rely on you. Pro-

testantism and the maintenance of the Union, loyalty, firm administration of justice, law and order——’

Charles yawned. Not for another half-hour could he hope for Lord Telltown’s departure.

CHAPTER V

SIR ARTHUR AINSLEY continued to sit in Parliament for two years after succeeding to the baronetcy, in spite of the fact that his actress wife’s cigarettes stank in the nostrils of his constituents. Charles Beauford became very impatient. As a patriot, he held that he would have been of much more use to his country than poor Ainsley, whose speeches were exceedingly few and feeble, and who delivered votes only in response to the most urgent whips. As a man with ambitions, he felt that his country might be of some use to him. It never would be to Sir Arthur Ainsley, who had already got by mere accident of inheritance most of what a country has got to give to those who serve a party faithfully.

At the end of two years, goaded by a dissatisfied Conservative Association, Sir Arthur announced his intention of resigning. Charles Beauford leaped at his opportunity, making arrangements to address Canon Hamilton’s Orangemen on the following twelfth of July. Placards decorated the walls and church gates, and the brethren were exhorted to assemble ‘in their thousands.’ The dawn of the great day was glorious. An almost cloudless sky held promise of heat at midday, reeking heat for mere members of the crowd, heat and much sweat for distinguished persons, orators, drummers, and standard-bearers. A large field, which formed part of Canon Hamilton’s glebe land, was the appointed place of meeting. To it the Orangemen, drawing from

various quarters, converged. The members of each lodge marched in military array, decorated with splendid sashes. Before them went their bands, strong in drums, weak in wind instruments. Yet the fife-players shrilled valiantly, and if they were sometimes inaudible by reason of the drummers' zeal, it mattered little, for everyone knew that they were playing 'The Protestant Boys.' A banner followed each band; no conventional arrangements of bunting these, but works of art, proclaiming sentiment symbolically. Here King William pranced on a white charger, an Arab, small-headed and thin-legged, across a bright green Boyne, contemptuous of distant cannon-smoke. There an open Bible was displayed, brass clasps hanging loose from its ponderous cover. There, again, a stirring watchword made its appeal, 'Civil and religious liberty,' or 'The walls of Derry.' Here a lodge, strongly militant, paraded behind a picture of a drawn sword. After the sashed marchers came an irregular body of camp followers. Wives, laden with provisions—bread and jam, baps buttered generously, bottles of milk, and other liquors—tramped cheerfully through the dust. Elder children, equipped with peppermint-flavoured sugar-sticks, towed chubby young ones by their hands, exhorting, scolding, and bribing laggards.

The entrance to the field, a broad gap broken in the wall for the occasion, was spanned by an arch made of laurel branches and orange lilies. Under it each detachment walked in turn. Once within the enclosure, the banners were planted in the ground, and the bands laid aside their instruments. The members of the lodges refreshed themselves, smoked, talked, and drove off irreverent small boys who surreptitiously crept up to beat the drums. In one corner of the field a rough wooden platform was erected. On it stood a row of chairs and a table, draped in red baize, bearing a Bible, a vase of orange lilies, a tumbler, and a jug of water.

Three o'clock was the hour fixed for the commence-

ment of the serious business of speechmaking. For half an hour beforehand the men gathered to the platform, leaving their families and the vicinity of their own standards. Grim elder men came plodding slowly across the fields, grey-beards with deeply-furrowed faces and hard blue eyes. These spoke little to one another, pausing between their utterances, leaving suspiciously unanswered the greetings of strangers. Younger men came, too, better dressed, as a rule, less silent, ruddy of face, and full-lipped, but with the same hard eyes. They are a strong people, these northern Orangemen, slow in making friends or trusting, very slow to grasp new ideas or accept new opinions, therefore immensely tenacious. If these men once give their friendship, neither remote absence nor passage of many years will break the tie. Thirty years afterwards their sons will still count their friend's son a friend. When once they trust a leader, they will not readily desert him, but it is only one or two men in a whole generation whom they trust. Their extraordinary tenacity of ideas has been a strength to them. Against it waves of vehement oratory and swelling tides of political revolution break themselves in vain. It has also been their weakness, for having once accepted the belief that English statesmen wish them well it has become almost impossible for them to understand that they are used, and for years have been used, simply as pawns in the game played by men who care less than nothing for the crudities of the Orange creed.

To these Orangemen came Charles Beauford, offering himself as their champion against the much-dreaded, vaguely-apprehended tyranny of the Church of Rome. They believed in their hearts that a new inquisition would be established in Ireland if the protecting power of England were withdrawn from them; or, if not literally the thumbscrew and the rack, a hardly less terrible bullying of them and of all who professed their creed. It is curious that they should hold such a belief, because in reality no Irishman,

certainly no Irishman worth considering, wants to bully them, and also because, even supposing the existence of the worst intentions, the rest of Ireland could not effectually bully the northern Protestants. But Charles Beauford did not mean to tell them this. He wished them to continue believing that English statesmen of the party he proposed to serve were the friends of liberty. He intended to persuade them that their interests were safe when laid before such English statesmen by glib-tongued advocates like himself.

Canon Hamilton rose to speak first. The men cheered him because they knew and trusted him. They were perfectly certain that he was entirely honest, and that he accepted without reserve their political and religious creed. They looked kindly at Charles Beauford because Canon Hamilton introduced him, yet when he rose to speak they did not cheer. They waited, anxious to hear what he had to say, to judge for themselves what kind of man he might be.

Charles Beauford began in what he believed to be a masterly manner. He flattered his audience, giving it out as his opinion that the men before him were the finest in Ireland. They did not cheer him yet. The remark was commonplace. The fact had often been stated in their hearing before, and they accepted it without misgiving. It is not worth while to waste cheers on truisms. He went on to assure them that they were worthy children of their ancestors, the men frequently referred to in orations, who had bled and died. He enumerated the occasions of the hæmorrhage, and set forth the spirit which had prompted such heroism. Devotion to the Protestant faith, and determination to preserve civil liberty, had animated the great ones of the past.

‘Is there less need now than then for such devotion and such determination?’

Mr. Beauford thought that the need was actually greater while he spoke than it was when the gates of Derry were shut in the face of King James. He denounced the savage persecution which, as his

audience believed, was the fate of Protestants in the south and west of Ireland. He also expressed hatred of the very idea of a Roman Catholic University. At this point the cheers of the audience became vigorous. Mr. Beauford felt that he had got on to the right track. He spoke of such a University as 'reactionary,' 'mediaeval,' 'sacerdotal,' and 'obscurantist.' These were brave words, and deserved the enthusiasm with which they were greeted. The audience had no very clear idea what they meant, but it was impossible not to feel how long they were, how rotund, how impressive, mouthed properly as Mr. Beauford mouthed them. Cheers followed—genuine, hearty cheers. Then came the climax of the speech: the noble appeal to rally round the old flag, to stand shoulder to shoulder, to die, if need be, in a ditch.

Mr. Beauford waved his arm southwards and westwards to indicate the localities in which the lethal ditches might be found. The audience cheered again and again. Men's faces hardened and their eyes brightened as they listened to him. Old Canon Hamilton beat his fist upon the table, shouting hoarse enthusiasm. It struck Mr. Beauford as he sat down that the men before him were actually incredibly in earnest; that they would even die, die in damp uncomfortable ditches, after shooting off antiquated muskets—would die very gladly for the sake of—— He smiled slightly. He had not the slightest idea, he did not suppose that they knew very clearly what they wanted to die for. Certainly he himself had no intention of dying if he could possibly help it. He meant to live, and it seemed as if these absurd Orangemen were going to help him to live comfortably. His speech had been a success. He would, he hoped, be sent to Westminster to make more speeches—to talk there the kind of bombast which deludes the English newspaper reader, just as he talked here what suited the Irish Orangemen. Then in due time he would reap the reward of much talking, obtaining some fatly

salaries legal office, with perhaps a title, certainly a retiring allowance attached to it.

Later in the afternoon a deputation waited on him. It consisted of five treasurers of Orange lodges, who solicited a contribution towards the cost of erecting a new Orange hall. Mr. Beauford produced his cheque-book smilingly, and sent the five treasurers away well satisfied with a hundred pounds. He could not really afford to give such a sum. He knew that he was living up to the last penny of his income, but the graphine speculation had turned out fairly well. He had not got rid of his shares at quite the highest price they had achieved, but he had sold them very satisfactorily. He gave cheerily, looking to see his hundred pounds bring in an enormous return.

Canon Hamilton apologised for offering his guest no more than a nondescript meal, half dinner, half supper.

‘You see, Charles, the twelfth is a great occasion here. My man is an Orangeman, and of course had to march with his lodge. My housekeeper, his wife, went with him or after him. She baked a pie and boiled a ham yesterday. Here they are.’ The Canon prodded the ham with the point of his knife as he spoke. ‘I hadn’t the heart to keep Susan at home. That’s the housemaid. The young man she walks with brought her a present of two orange lilies this morning. He’s the postman; a very decent young fellow, though I suspect he took the two lilies out of my garden as he came round with the early letters. Susan was very good. She offered to come home and make us a cup of tea, and so she has. There it is in front of you.’

Charles Beauford had all his life been accustomed to a good dinner in the evening. A cold rabbit-pie and a cup of tea did not attract him. Even the prospect, indicated by the decanter and tumblers on the sideboard, of a glass of whisky and water afterwards encouraged him but little. Still, the day had been, on the whole, a success, and he sat down comparatively cheerfully.

'I was very much pleased with your speech,' said the Canon.

'Ah! I'm glad to hear you say so. The audience took it very well. I think I managed to say the right kind of thing.'

'You said what is true, and that is what we want. I think you meant it too, and that's what we want still more.'

Charles Beauford had known Canon Hamilton for many years, and believed that he had sounded the full depths of the old gentleman's prejudice and ignorance. Yet it came to him as a surprise that any educated man could expect him to mean the things he had said that afternoon. He realised that he must keep a close watch upon himself.

'Of course,' he replied. 'It's most necessary, more necessary now than ever before, that we Protestants should be on the watch against every species of Roman aggression.'

'Poor Ainsley—Sir Arthur, you know—our member, used to be very sound. He said very much what you said, but not so well. Without flattering you, I may say not nearly so well. Unfortunately, he got mixed up with a queer lot over in London. He has seldom been in his place in Parliament lately, and last session he forgot to ask a question about the lunatic asylum doctor who refused to drink the King's health. Then there's his wife, of course. An unfortunate business, Charles—most unfortunate.'

'I suppose you have not fixed on his successor yet.' Charles Beauford's heart beat quickly as he spoke. Canon Hamilton was chairman of the Conservative Association, and a high official in the Orange order. A good deal depended on his answer.

'Well,' said the Canon, 'Vesey of Belvidere would stand if we asked him—old Colonel Vesey, you know. He's a sound man, reliable in every essential point, but he's old, and we all know that he's not very brilliant. Now, I'm inclined to think that we ought to have a man with brains, a man who can speak.'

'You ought.' Charles Beauford spoke with conviction. 'There's no use sending a man without brains into Parliament, especially at a time like the present. Look at those Nationalist fellows. They can speak, and who have we got to answer them?'

'Quite so. That is exactly my own opinion. I expressed it at the last meeting of the Conservative Association when we were talking about Ainsley's resignation. It has occurred to me, Charles, that perhaps you might be induced to stand. Of course, I only speak for myself, and have not mentioned the matter to anyone. I understand that you have a fine practice at the bar, and no doubt it would suffer if you were much in London. Still, at a critical time like the present, when the Union is threatened, Rome aggressive, and the forces of anarchy threatening the country, you may perhaps feel called upon to make some sacrifice.'

Charles Beauford had some difficulty in maintaining an expression of face suitable to the occasion. The Canon looked at the matter in such an absurd way. Still, it would not be well to argue with him.

'Of course, it would mean a loss to me. Still, as you say, the sacrifice of one's own private interests becomes a duty at a time like this, when——'

He repeated without smiling the phrases about aggression and anarchy. He supposed that all the Orangemen over whom Canon Hamilton was a kind of chief would insist on his maintaining this heroic pose. He wondered what kind of men sat at the meetings of the Conservative Association. Would they think and speak of his self-sacrifice? Perhaps they would. Vesey of Belvidere—old Colonel Vesey—was no doubt a type, a sound man, but not very brilliant. Charles pictured old Vesey, a grey-whiskered man, a rider of steady cobs, a drinker of good wines, immensely strong in antique prejudice, the inhabitant of a square pew in church on Sunday mornings, the secretary, perhaps, of an orphan society. No doubt Vesey of Belvidere, sound old

Colonel Vesey, would expect a man to sacrifice himself by going into Parliament.

‘I’m sure,’ said the Canon, ‘that you’d like to smoke. Pour yourself out some whisky and water, and come into the study. We can finish our talk there.’

But Charles would not trust himself to a long discussion of his position and perhaps a searching analysis of his motives. He felt—and the feeling was wholly unfamiliar to him—afraid of Canon Hamilton. There is something about perfectly simple, unintelligent honesty which actually terrifies men of brains and ambition. It is not safe to talk long to quite straightforward people who are the slaves of a high moral code.

‘I need not delay about my answer,’ he said. ‘If your Association nominates me and the Orange lodges accept me, I shall be prepared to stand for this division of the county.’

‘Thank you. I hoped you would. I was half afraid to ask you, but now I’m glad I did. To tell you the truth, it was just in hopes that you might see your way to stand that I asked you down to address us to-day. I think you will be nominated. Of course, I only speak for myself, but I have a good deal of influence in the county, and we are really badly off for a man of the right sort at present.’

Charles Beauford poured himself out some whisky, a larger quantity than he usually drank, and preceded the Canon into the study. A small lamp, hastily trimmed by Susan while the postman waited for her, very dimly illuminated the shelves heavy with old-fashioned Protestant theology. There were rows and rows of commentaries written by the forgotten class of scholars who believed that the Bible was the Word of God; quaint treatises by Puritan divines on demons; the Sabbath considered as an antediluvian institution, and kindred topics. A thick black tome, entitled ‘A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors,’ lay open on the writing-table, surrounded

with manuscript notes of a forthcoming sermon. An engraved portrait of a deceased county magnate, supplied to subscribers at a guinea, hung in an oak frame over the chimneypiece. On the opposite wall was a large coloured engraving of the siege of Jerusalem. Roman cavalry pranced down a hill. Roman infantry approached the walls with immense battering-rams. Despairing Jews committed suicide with spears on distant pinnacles. A lurid cloud hung over the whole scene.

'There is another matter about which I wish to speak to you,' said the Canon.

'Yes?'

'The boy—Benedict Kavanagh. He's seventeen years old now, and we ought soon to be deciding what we are to do with him.'

'I meant to speak to you about him. My mother is most anxious to hear my opinion of him now he is growing up. I suppose he's at school now.'

'No. Oh no. He's at home for the holidays. He was at the meeting this afternoon standing close beside the platform. Your speech evidently excited him greatly. I could see him waving his hat and cheering with the best of them.'

Charles was not favourably impressed with this account of Benedict Kavanagh. He did not think highly of the intellectual powers of either man or boy who cheered his speech.

'He has done well at school,' the Canon went on. 'He has got several prizes at the intermediate examinations, and seems to have a real taste for books. In fact, he reads everything he can lay hands on. I think, perhaps, your mother would like to put him through college.'

'Is he the sort of boy to make a parson of?'

'No. I should say not at all. He doesn't show the slightest leanings in any such direction. I don't mean to say that he's a bad boy, vicious, or anything of that sort. But he is very headstrong and self-willed. To tell you the truth, he is getting to be

rather too much for me. He has a good heart, but he has a queer obstinate temper, and any attempt to drive him ends in an outbreak.

‘That’s not a bad kind of character,’ said Charles, ‘if only the energy can be diverted into a right direction. But I don’t think we’ll send him to college. You see, my dear Canon, the boy will have to make his own way in life. I think a sound business training will be of more value to him than a B.A. degree. And for the sort of boy you describe the discipline of an office, subordination, regular hours, habits of attention to detail, and so forth, will be far better than the freedom of life in Trinity. He’d only be getting into mischief there. But where is he? I should like to see him.’

‘Oh, well, you see, this is a holiday here. And Benedict wanted to go off with a friend of his, John Ginty, a strong farmer and a great Orangeman. I told him he need not be home for supper. But you’ll see him to-morrow morning.’

‘That will be all right. Of course, my mother will expect a description of his appearance, and so forth.’

‘You spoke of a business training for him.’

‘Yes. What I had in my mind was this: You know Jeffars and Digby, or you know of them—the firm of land agents. They manage my father-in-law’s property and a small estate of my mother’s down in county Galway, and lots of other properties besides. Their principal office is in Dublin, but they have various branch offices in different parts of the country. I’ve no doubt that I can get them to give Benedict a clerkship.’

‘A land agent’s clerk!’ said Canon Hamilton. He was evidently disappointed. ‘But will that ever lead to anything?’

‘He’ll get a fine business training, none better. Then after five or six years, if he turns out well, we can get him something worth having. Don’t be afraid. We won’t see him stranded if he is any good.’

CHAPTER VI

TRAVELLERS to Dunbeg leave the Dublin train at a bleak junction, climb a steep iron staircase, cross a bridge, and re-embark in the local train which awaits them if they are fortunate. Frequently they have to wait on a windswept platform or in a draughty shed while the small engine which hauls the Dunbeg traffic shoves or drags its three coaches up and down over the various points and sidings which are the glory of the junction. It never really matters much when a traveller arrives in Dunbeg, and the driver of the engine has a pretty taste in the problems of locomotive shunting. It is pleasant to the intelligent traveller to watch him and the station-master trying to get the guard's van to the rear and the engine to the front of the two coaches for the return journey. A short dart is made eastwards along a siding, a loud whistle proclaims the success of the expedition, and the guard's van is left behind. The engine, with its diminished train, speeds westward, whistles joyfully again, and deposits the two coaches on the main line. A long expedition is made by the engine alone. It jolts over many points and returns to the van, which is hooked on. There is more whistling, considerable activity on the part of the junction porter, some advice shouted by the station-master, and the engine finds itself hemmed into an apparently hopeless position between the two coaches and the van. A heated argument ensues, in which the travellers, if they belong to the locality and understand the methods of the railway company, take a part. Then the little rushes up and down the various lines begin again, and continue until the train arranges itself.

The mere stranger is sometimes irritated by the delay, especially if it happens to be raining and the

wind is cold. He complains that the shunting ought to have been done before the hour fixed for the starting of the train. He threatens, if he is a choleric man, to write to the traffic manager. But such talk is merely foolish. The traffic manager has weightier matters on his mind than the Dunbeg branch line, and he knows, as the traveller ought to know, that time does not matter once the Shannon is crossed. Besides, the complaint is unjust. The shunting has been going on ever since the train arrived from Dunbeg. It is the complexity of the problem of rearranging the coaches, and not any neglect on the part of the engine-driver, which occasions the delay.

Benedict Kavanagh, on his way to take up the work of junior clerk in Messrs. Jeffars and Digby's Dunbeg office, reached the junction on a most unlucky day. It was raining so heavily that the water flowed in a thin cascade down the steps of the iron bridge, and lay in broad pools right across the platform. The wind blew with a pitiless persistence peculiar to the winds of Irish railway stations, and it blew right across into the shed which was supposed to afford some shelter to the passengers. The local train was involved in more than usual difficulties by the presence of a fish-van. It was quite hopeless to guess at the reasons for bringing a fish-van to Dunbeg, a town remote from sea or lake. It had to go, and it had somehow to be got into position behind the two coaches. The train lay scattered in every direction, and the engine snorted hopelessly beside the platform. Benedict's box was deposited by the porter in the middle of the permanent way. Another box, the property of his solitary fellow-passenger, lay to all appearance forgotten where the guard of the Dublin train had left it. A young girl, its owner, was trying to cross the iron bridge. As she tried to descend, a sudden gust of wind swept down upon her. Her petticoats were swirled around her legs and wrapped tight in damp folds, preventing movement. A grey tweed cape blew upwards from

behind, and then down over her hat and face. Her umbrella struggled in her grasp, and then, yielding to some inward passion, made itself supremely ridiculous to look at by turning inside out. Benedict Kavanagh hastened to the rescue. He caught the ends of the flapping cape, and folded it back into its proper position; reduced the umbrella to calmness, at the expense of a couple of broken ribs, by closing it; and held the girl steady while she freed herself from the entanglement of her skirt.

'Thank you,' she said, looking up at him shyly, but with some laughter in her eyes. 'I was in a fix, wasn't I?'

They descended together, paddled across the platform, and sought shelter in the shed. There was not much shelter to be found while the wind blew right into it.

'You'll be wet through in a few minutes,' said Benedict. 'Why on earth isn't the train ready?'

'It doesn't in the least matter,' she said; 'I haven't far to go once I get to Dunbeg.'

Benedict glanced at her face, and saw that she was an exceedingly pretty girl with a dazzlingly fair complexion. She raised her eyes suddenly, and met his. Benedict, caught in the act of admiring her, blushed guiltily, and looked away. The girl blushed too, but there was delight and a merry challenge in her eyes. Evidently she liked being admired, and saw a prospect of spending her time pleasantly in the shed in spite of wind and rain. The engine rushed past the platform, shrieking excitedly. It had successfully captured the fish-van and one of the coaches. Only the other coach and the guard's van remained to be pursued. There was hope that the start for Dunbeg would soon be made.

Benedict and the girl exchanged confidences in the shed. Both were travelling to the same destination. This at once formed a bond of union. The girl's name was Lizzie Finlay. Benedict gave his own in exchange, and at once 'Mr Kavanagh' commenced

or closed every sentence she addressed to him. It seemed to him that she spoke the words in the prettiest way imaginable, half familiarly, half shyly. He informed her that he was visiting Dunbeg for the first time. She, it appeared, was going home, to her mother's house.

'And what sort of a place is Dunbeg?'

'Indeed now, do you think I can tell you much about it, Mr. Kavanagh? I've been out of it, away at school, for the last seven years, excepting just the holidays. I don't look old enough to have been much of a judge of a town before that. Now do I?'

He could not but look at her again, and again she saw the admiration in his eyes. This time she demanded more of it.

'I think I'll take off my cape and shake the wet off it, Mr. Kavanagh.'

Benedict took it from her, and realised that the soft, full figure of the girl was very beautiful. She raised her hands and took off her hat to shake the raindrops from it. She looked at him laughing and blushing. A great mass of tossed and tangled bright gold hair made a damp, unsaintly aureole round her head. Benedict glowed with a sudden admiration, and—for he was little more than a boy—turned away to hide his feeling. He shook the cape vehemently, sending showers of water into the damp-laden atmosphere. When he turned to her again her smile was gone. She received the cape from his hands, and refused his timid offer to hold it while she put it on. The station-master informed Benedict that the train was waiting for them. His manner suggested that it had been ready for a long time, and had been kept in the station to meet the convenience of the passengers. Miss Finlay stepped across the platform and into a second-class compartment.

'Good-evening, Mr. Kavanagh,' she said frigidly.

Benedict's ticket entitled him to no more than third-class accommodation. He eyed the cushionless, damp compartments hesitatingly. Then the

guard hustled him, apparently angrily, into one with a leaky roof and a pool of water on the seat. The Irish traveller, accustomed to the ways of his own railway servants, is always surprised by the civility and consideration shown him by the same class in England. The contrast is the more astonishing because the ordinary unofficial Irishman is much more courteous to strangers than most Englishmen. The latter learns manners when he puts on a uniform; the former, though there are notable exceptions to the rule, seems to regard the wearing of brass buttons as a good reason for discarding the courtesy natural to him. Perhaps the reason for this is to be found in the different way in which the two nations regard officials. In England it is generally believed that officials of all sorts, even the highest, hold their positions for the benefit of the public—are, in fact, the paid servants of the public—and therefore bound to be civil to their masters. In Ireland, on the other hand, everyone knows that the existence of the private citizen is tolerated only because otherwise there would be no one to pay the officials. The public is a herd of cows suffered to graze about the land in order that officials may have milk. No man in his senses is civil to a cow. Therefore in Ireland the traveller is hunted in and out of trains with scant consideration to his feelings, unless he happens to travel first-class. Then, because he is suspected of being a superior kind of official, he is treated with great deference.

At Dunbeg Benedict hoped to renew his acquaintance with Miss Lizzie Finlay. He was disappointed. A group of relatives and friends awaited her on the platform. An elderly woman, down whose cheeks tears and raindrops trickled together, embraced the girl, talking volubly between her kisses. Three young women in draggled brown waterproof coats added more damp kisses. One sleek young man and then another shook her hand, greeting her as Lizzie. An elderly police-sergeant smiled benignant approval.

'Bedad, and it's a fine girl you've grown to be, Lizzie Finlay. And your mother will be taking a great pride out of you, and why wouldn't she?'

'Isn't it a grand young lady they've sent her home?' said one of the girls.

'It is surely,' said the sergeant. 'Not one in the town has a better right to be proud of her daughter than yourself, Mrs. Finlay. I hope now'—he turned with a paternal smile to Lizzie—'that you'll be a comfort to your mother and a help to her.'

'Ah, then, and why wouldn't she,' said her mother, 'when she's had the best of education since she was a small little girleen? Why wouldn't she be good?'

Lizzie herself was not wholly pleased with her reception. It was friendly and affectionate. It was homely, unaffected—a genuine welcome. But Lizzie had enjoyed a superior education, and had grown accustomed to a certain quiet refinement. Life in her school had been ordered, regular, for the most part unemotional—a neat and tidy life. The girls did not kiss each other overmuch, and did not kiss at all when raindrops were coursing down their faces. She shrank a little from these unregulated embraces. She resented the police-sergeant's appreciation of her appearance. The fact that he had married her mother's sister did not seem to give him the right to call her a fine girl. Besides, he was fat. She did not care to be hailed as Lizzie by sleek young men. She remembered them very well. In the days when they were elder boys and she a small girl in the Dunbeg national school they had shared rarely-obtained toffee and apples with her. But since then she had associated at school with young ladies whose homes, she believed, were very grand indeed. She glanced round to catch a glimpse of her fellow-traveller, but he was gone. Lizzie was led to the car on which her luggage had already been placed.

Benedict Kavanagh, leaving his luggage in charge of a porter, asked his way to the office of Messrs.

Jeffars and Digby. It was not hard to find. The road from the railway station, on such a day ankle-deep with liquid mud, led straight to the main street of Dunbeg. Squeezed in between the shops stood the two banks which competed for the profitable business of lending the money of the publicans to small farmers. The house of the Midland Banking Company spread an unblushing front to public view. It was newer, higher, cleaner than the shops on either side of it. A handsome porch lured depositors and borrowers to push open the swing-doors beyond it. Further on, still more striking in its architecture, stood the Dublin Bank. The name was carved in high relief across the entrance-door, and blazed in bright gold letters on the perforated zinc blinds which covered the lower half of the windows. Its front, no doubt in accordance with the terms of some ancient lease, encroached several feet upon the footway. It is impossible to deny that Irishmen possess a high capacity for finance. How otherwise can banking companies afford these solid and yet splendid buildings in towns where hardly anyone else seems rich enough to mend a leaky roof? How else can they, in a country stricken with poverty, pay dividends beyond the most optimistic dreams of bank-directors in wealthy England?

Opposite the Dublin bank stood the office of Jeffars and Digby, a low, old-womanish building, shrinking modestly back from the road. An iron railing guarded a narrow strip of grass from the feet of the passers-by. Some ornamental shrubs veiled the dirty windows against curious eyes, and darkened the office within. A space had been reserved on either side of it, so that the oilskin coats which hung outside Mr. Davoren's drapery establishment could not flap against its walls on the left, nor the customers of the public-house on the right find excuse for resting a while against its railing before setting out on their homeward journeys. Here, after the autumn fair, came prosperous farmers with rolls

of dirty notes, paying rent. Here, later on, came the less fortunate, crossing the road from one or other bank with borrowed money, also to pay rent. Here, later still, came widows and gaunt men, those who could not even borrow, bringing instead of rent sad tales of heifers smitten with red murrain, or fine bullocks hauled maimed out of bottomless bog-holes. Here of late were displayed ordnance survey sheets with estates outlined red, farms marked off from each other, shaded spaces noted as bog, a highroad and many bohireens clearly shown. Piles of agreement-forms ready stamped for signing stood on the clerk's desk, for already estates were being sold and bought.

Benedict entered the office. Behind a broad counter stood a clerk, a fair-haired youth with merry eyes. He was copying letters in a press, listening as he did so to the rambling and deeply-involved description given by a sallow countryman of an invasion of his rights of turbary. Beyond, through an open door, could be seen Mr. McCreery, local manager for Jeffars and Digby, seated at his desk. He caught sight of Benedict, and came forward into the outer office.

'Mr Kavanagh, I presume? We were expecting you to-day. Your train must have been late. The usual delay at the junction, I suppose. The railway company is past praying for.'

Mr. McCreery was a tall, florid man, with a kindly, good-humoured face. Benedict looked at him, and liked him. Evidently he was one who, within moderate limits, treated himself well, was on good terms with his own body, and therefore likely to be well disposed towards those with whom he came in contact. Indeed, in spite of his profession and his vigorous Protestantism, Mr. McCreery was popular in Dunbeg. It was well understood that his powers were very limited, that he was answerable to his employers in Dublin; and when popular indignation was excited over some case of eviction, or a bargain driven too hard, the maledictions passed Mr. McCreery by, and

burst somewhat ineffectively against the heads of the firm in Dublin or the yet remoter landlord. With Mr. Jeffars—Mr. Digby hardly counted, being old—Mr. McCreery was in good repute. No local agent was more successful in gathering rent. None did so with less friction and at less expense.

He shook Benedict by the hand, and introduced the clerk to him.

‘This is Mr. Gillespie. Mr. Gillespie is under me in the office, and when I am away he takes charge of everything. He came here, just as you do, a stranger to the place. I gave him the same advice I’m giving you. Don’t be too intimate with the people here. Be friendly with them, of course—quite friendly, but not intimate. In our line of life it doesn’t do to be intimate. One never knows what trouble will come of it. Besides, nineteen out of every twenty of the people are on the other side—Catholics, you know. It’s better not to mix yourself up too much with them. But be friendly, of course—quite friendly. I’ve asked Mr. Gillespie to take you round to his lodgings. He leaves by the late train to-night, so his rooms will be vacant. You needn’t stay there unless you like, of course; but it’s a respectable house, and you might do worse. But please yourself, please yourself. And now I must be getting on with my work. You’d better wait here till Mr. Gillespie has finished. Sit down by the fire and read the paper. Always make a point of reading the local paper. The others matter less, but the local paper you must read. There it is for you, *The Dunbeg Champion*—a dirty, low rag, but read it, read it. It will strike you as dull at first, but when you get to know the people it will interest you. Besides, it is never done abusing me, and there’s always a pleasure in seeing something bad about your friends in print. Not that the editor means any harm. He and I are the best of friends, and the very fellows who write the worst things about me would be the first to do me a good turn if they thought they could without compromising themselves. It’s

all part of the game, and the editor has got to fill up his space somehow. He understands, and I understand, and the people understand, and at the end of the year nobody is a pin the worse of it all.'

CHAPTER VII

BENEDICT sat down at the fire, and began his study of *The Dunbeg Champion*. On the front page was an account of the presentation of an illuminated address to one Father O'Meara by the members of the Gaelic League. It was headed, 'Departure of Father O'Meara—Enthusiastic for the Language Revival—Beloved Priest honoured by the People.' A Mr. Doyne, described as secretary of the Gaelic League, had taken a leading part in the proceedings. Benedict read superciliously. He had heard of the Gaelic League. Vague rumours of its doings had reached Killard and Canon Hamilton's rectory. Benedict's mind was impressed with the idea that it was a new form of the United Irish League, that it aimed at shooting landlords and extirpating Protestants. It seemed to him suitable enough that its members should present illuminated addresses to priests. All priests, he believed, were liars, and whenever opportunity offered, tyrants and bullies. He skipped Mr. Doyne's remarks, the words of the address and Father O'Meara's reply. Next in prominence came the obituary notices. Three leading citizens had lately passed from Dunbeg, and apparently most of the rest of the inhabitants of the town had attended their funerals. All three had been eminent men, beloved and respected on account of their public and private virtues. Many 'floral tributes' had decorated their handsome coffins.

He passed from these to the Petty Sessions news.

It appeared that in Dunbeg, as elsewhere, people got drunk, used abusive language to each other, and were summoned for assaulting their neighbours. One somewhat novel case attracted his attention. Jamesy Freehan had been bitten by a dog, and claimed against Daniel Rafferty, the owner of the savage animal. Rafferty had three lines of defence. In the first place, he denied that Freehan had been bitten. The wound, if any wound existed at all, was no more than a scratch inflicted by Freehan's mother's cat. If, however, Freehan really had been bitten, the dog which did the deed was not Rafferty's but Freehan's own. It had been Rafferty's dog once—a yellow dog it was, with one lame leg, by reason of its having been caught in a trap maliciously set for it by Freehan when the poor creature was no more than a pup. It was not Rafferty's dog any longer, because he had given it to Freehan at the fair of Inch a week and two days before the alleged biting took place.

'Himself was admiring the way the creature would be sorting out the sheep, and them scattered here and there and up and down the fair. And I said to him, knowing the boy was poor and that his father before him was a decent man and a good neighbour: "Keep him, Jamesy—keep him—since you fancy him."'

Rafferty further maintained that, admitting for the sake of argument that Freehan had been bitten, not scratched, and waiving for the present the question of ownership, the dog was entirely justified in biting Freehan. Wasn't he in the very act of breaking down a loose stone wall when the dog caught him?

'And it's not the first time he has done that same. Hasn't he an old beast of a cow that he's always putting in on to my meadow whenever my back is turned? and only for the respect I have for his mother, that is a friend of my own, though not a near one—her sister being the wife of Patsy James Rafferty, my father's brother—I'd have summoned him for trespass long ago. It's a nice return he's making me with all

this botheration about a bite that the youngest gossoon would be laughing at; and he might have had a hair out of the dog's tail to lay to it for the asking, or the whole tail for the matter of that, if it would have been any sort of a satisfaction to him.'

The report of the case occupied a column and a half of the paper, and Benedict had not nearly arrived at the decision of the magistrates when the office-door opened and a clergyman entered. He was evidently a Protestant, for he wore immense moustaches—an ornament denied by custom, perhaps by canon law, to the priests of the Roman Church. He was also a person of some importance, for he swung open the door magnificently, greeted Mr. Gillespie with exuberant though somewhat condescending friendliness, and inquired for Mr. McCreery. He wanted, it appeared, to discuss the condition of the church roof, which, in his opinion, required two new slates. Conversation drifted from that to the health of Mrs. McCreery, who had caught cold while travelling home from Dublin. Then, naturally, hard things were said of the railway company, and gibes made about the wicked unpunctuality of the trains. Mr. McCreery suddenly recollected Benedict, and introduced him.

'This is Mr. Kavanagh, our new hand, Mr. Adamson. Mr. Adamson,' he added to Benedict, 'is our Rector.'

'I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Kavanagh,' said the clergyman. 'I had a letter from Canon Hamilton about you. I know him slightly—a fine old gentleman. I meet him at the Synod in Dublin every year. He asked me to look after you a bit, and keep you out of mischief. But you are in very good hands here. Mr. McCreery is my church-warden. I hope I'll see a good deal of you. We're having a little party at the Rectory to-morrow afternoon. I hope you'll come. As soon as I go home, I'll tell my wife to send you an invitation card. Good-bye for to-day. I hope you'll be happy in Dunbeg. You won't forget to see about those slates, McCreery. Remember

me kindly to your wife. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mr. Gillespie. Horrible weather, isn't it?'

He disappeared, waving a hand cheerfully. The office seemed brighter than it had been before he entered. It was the manner of Mr. Adamson to be blown about his parish by breezes of impulsive and good-natured fussiness. No man had ever seen him depressed or out of temper. There was no record, and he had been nearly twenty years in Dunbeg, of his ever having been unwell for a single day. It is not likely that he taught his parishioners the ways of lofty holiness, but he certainly imparted to them a buoyant optimism. Cheerfulness radiated from him like heat from a fire, and even the twelfth chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes savoured of springtime and hopefulness when he read it in church on dismal Sunday mornings in November.

The office closed shortly after the Rector left, and Benedict went forth under the guidance of Mr. Gillespie to inspect the lodgings which had been engaged for him. Mrs. Finlay's house stood in a side street, and its external appearance was not attractive. The walls were, as Mr. Gillespie expressed it, 'white-washed yellow,' and the windows, for want of cleaning, matched the walls. An exceedingly bedraggled maidservant opened the door, and left the two young men standing on a tattered mat while she shuffled down a passage to summon her mistress. Benedict recognised Mrs. Finlay at once as the elderly woman who had met the girl at the train. She greeted him in a friendly manner, and showed him the sitting-room which he was to share with two other young gentlemen.

'There's only two stopping here at present,' she said. 'There's Mr. Doyne, a very proper young gentleman. He stays at home mostly of an evening, and smokes his pipe and studies. He's always studying something, mostly the Irish, they tell me, though what good *that* will be to him neither I nor anybody else knows. Then there is Mr. Evans, who is

assistant to Mr. Andrews, the dentist in High Street. He's a Protestant—not that I think any the worse of him for that. It's my experience—and I've kept lodgings for young men ever since Mr. Finlay died and I sold out the business to Kerrigan, the same that has it now and is making a good thing out of it—it's my experience that there's many a Protestant young man that keeps himself decent and respectable, and is friendly with the people. Indeed, why wouldn't they? That's Mr. Evans's dog there, lying before the fire. He's great on dogs, is Mr. Evans, and I must say that one's a good, quiet beast, and gives little trouble in the house. But I hope you won't be wanting to keep a dog, Mr. Kavanagh. One's enough in a house the size of this one.'

Benedict inspected the sitting-room while she spoke to him. It was long in proportion to its breadth, and lit by a small window at one end. The floor was half carpeted, the walls lavishly decorated with pictures, framed and unframed. One, which caught his attention at once, represented a gentleman dressed in a manner extremely fashionable thirty years ago, ferrying a lady and a large dog across an artificial lake in a boat of quite unique construction. A magnificent castle, towards which their course was evidently directed, stood in the background, and a small girl, simpering amiably, waved a farewell from the shore they had left. The lady in the boat reclined in a graceful attitude, and plucked with her hand an enormous water-lily, while her cavalier stood in the bows poising what was apparently a punt-pole. In sharp contrast to the aristocratic magnificence suggested by the artist stood a table covered with a very soiled cloth. On it was a greasy plate, a well-picked chop-bone, and a pile of potato-skins, remnants, perhaps, of Mr. Doyne's dinner or Mr. Evans's—probably of Mr. Evans's, for on the floor beside the departed diner's chair lay a melodeon, an instrument not likely to be owned by the studious Mr. Doyne. Over the chimney-piece were the letters 'M. F.,' glaring eighteen

inches high upon the wall. They were formed entirely of small pictures taken from packets of cigarettes. No two pictures, as Benedict discovered later by careful study, were the same, and the consumption of cigarettes required for the work must have been enormous. Mrs. Finlay explained:

‘M. F.,’ she said, ‘is for Mary Finlay. That’s my name, you know. It was poor Mr. Hopkins did it, and a nice young gentleman he was, and a good watchmaker, they say; but, sure, the poor boy was a bit foolish, and he got with bad company, and took a drop too much. Indeed, it’s hardly ever he was sober the last two months he was here, and he left owing me a week’s rent. But I never had the heart to take away the letters. Nor it wouldn’t be easy, if I wanted to itself, for he stuck them up with glue.’

Benedict was led off to view the bedroom. He was to share it with Mr. Doyne. Mrs. Finlay thought he would prefer Mr. Doyne’s company at night to that of Mr. Evans, because Mr. Evans always had the dog sleeping at the foot of the bed, and sometimes played the melodeon if he woke early in the morning.

‘And what time,’ she asked, ‘would you be wanting your tea? The other two gentlemen will be having theirs at six. Maybe that would suit you. And between this and then you could be getting your box down from the station.’

Benedict agreed. At the bottom of the stairs he was met by Lizzie Finlay. She had got rid of the wet clothes in which he had seen her at the junction, and shone before his eyes, resplendent in finery, all the more glorious by contrast with the sordidness of her mother’s house. She was very demure, and did not address him, though she smiled pleasantly.

Mrs. Finlay provided two boiled eggs for Benedict’s tea, in recognition of the fact that he had travelled, and therefore, presumably, had not dined. For Mr. Doyne and Mr. Evans, the dentist’s assistant, there was only bread and butter. Conversation turned first on the home-coming of Lizzie Finlay. Mr. Evans

hoped that she would turn out to be good fun. He was already assured that she was good-looking. In his opinion, Dunbeg was a dull town, and needed awakening. A really frivolous girl might supply the element necessary for the complete enjoyment of life.

‘What I complain of in these Irish towns’—Mr. Evans came from Swansea, and was therefore entitled to look down on Connaught—‘is the want of interest in life.’

‘Now, that’s just what I’ve been saying to you for the last two months,’ said Mr. Doyne. ‘Why don’t you join the Gaelic League? You’d find plenty of interest in life if you did.’

‘I’m a Protestant,’ said Mr. Evans stoutly. He was, as a matter of fact, a Protestant of so vehement a type, being a Calvinistic Methodist, that he felt bound to enter a protest against every kind of religion known in Dunbeg, thereby cutting himself off from the mild dissipation of Mr. Adamson’s parochial tea-parties.

‘I’ve often told you that the Gaelic League has nothing to do with religion,’ said Mr. Doyne. The subject might have developed in an interesting way had not Mrs. Finlay’s tattered handmaiden entered and given Benedict a letter. It contained the card of invitation promised him by the Rector. Meaning to be friendly he showed it to his companions. Mr. Evans took it first, and surveyed it with some contempt.

‘I see you’re going to associate with the upper classes,’ he said. “‘Mrs. Adamson at home.’” Look at the style of that. You won’t be able to bear living with Doyne and me if the aristocracy take to asking you to parties. “‘Town Tea’”—now, what the devil does the old cat mean by “‘Town Tea’”?’

‘I haven’t the slightest idea,’ said Benedict; ‘I thought perhaps you’d be able to tell me.’

‘Well, I can’t. I’ve heard of China tea, and Indian tea and Assam tea, but “‘Town Tea’” beats me. Come, now, Doyne, if your Gaelic League is

any good, it ought to teach you all about local manufactures. Here's Mrs. Adamson supporting home industry, and asking her friends to drink "Town Tea." Does anyone here about keep a tea orchard?'

Mr. Doyne smiled. He was convinced that no one in Ireland grew tea, but he had no more idea than Mr. Evans what the drink was which Mrs. Adamson proposed to offer to her guests.

'Anyway,' said Mr. Evans, 'it's evidently something mighty swagger. You won't so much as notice Doyne and me when you come back. We're not swells, thank God!'

He whistled to his dog, and departed in search of such amusement as the rain-soaked streets might afford. Mr. Doyne was also shy of Benedict's unexpected grandeur. He produced a battered Irish text-book from his pocket, and set to work to read over, with silent distortions of his mouth, the lesson he had to prepare for the Gaelic League class on the following evening.

CHAPTER VIII

It was Mr. McCreery in the office next morning who cleared up the enigma of the 'Town Tea.' He also had been bidden, and he explained to Benedict that each guest was expected to make a pun on the name of some city or town, and to exhibit his jest in some visible form on his person or attire. The time before and after tea was to be spent in guessing the meaning of as many as possible of the other guests' badges. Mr. McCreery had secured for himself a picture post-card representing two soldiers running rapidly towards a half-closed barrack gate. This, he thought, might fairly be taken to represent the capital of Ireland.

'Double in,' he explained—'Dublin. See?'

Then, because Benedict looked blank, he explained further in a rather aggrieved tone: 'They *are* doubling in, aren't they?'

The arrival of the post, and the necessity of opening and classifying a large correspondence, put an end to the conversation for the time. Later on Mr. McCreery resumed it.

'What will you go as?'

Benedict did not know.

'It's a pity,' said Mr. McCreery, whose mind seemed fertile in the production of puns, 'that Glasgow is spelt with a *g*, though, indeed, I don't see where you could get a glass cow. My wife has a china one on her drawing-room mantelpiece, but that would hardly do. They might not think it fair.'

Benedict ran over a list of wholly impossible names—Paris, Turin, Boston, Geneva, Timbuctoo. There seemed no chance of getting a pun out of any place in the world except the already appropriated Dublin.

'I'll tell you what,' said McCreery cheerfully: 'Suppose you brush your hair very smooth, and tie your tie as straight as possible, and polish up your boots, and generally make yourself as spruce as possible all over; you might go as Trim. I don't think it's half a bad idea, quite original. In fact, I prefer it to my Dublin. I'd take it myself, and give you the postcard, only I'm not the sort of man who could look trim. A man with my face and figure can't, no matter what he does to himself.'

'Would that do? I thought you said I must have a card or something pinned on to me.'

Mr. McCreery pondered the objection, and admitted that it had weight. 'Well, of course you ought. Still, you are a stranger, and you have not had a very long notice of the party. It takes time to think these things out. I was at least five days going over a geography book before I hit upon Dublin.'

The drawing-room of the Rectory was decked for festival when Benedict arrived. Drawn curtains excluded the remainder of the daylight. A lamp

poised on a tall bamboo stem was so shrouded in red silk that it could only emit the feeblest rays. Four candles placed on tables in corners of the room were similarly reduced to the verge of impotence, in spite of the evangelic maxim which Mrs. Adamson as a clergyman's wife must, it may be supposed, have known. But the good lady had read many articles in penny and even more highly-priced periodicals on the beautifying of the home. She therefore knew that dim light was artistic, and that nothing is more offensive to really refined sensibilities than a glare of any kind. She accepted these pronouncements wholeheartedly, and lived up to them in summer by means of drawn blinds, in winter with lamp and candle-shades. Only the blaze of the fire gave the guests a chance of recognising each other and deciphering the conundrums prepared for their amusement. A piano obtruded its back into the middle of the room. Mrs. Adamson was particularly proud of her piano's back, because she had nailed on it several yards of a material described in a sale catalogue as 'rich' and 'oriental.' This also was in accordance with the teaching of her favourite papers about beautiful homes.

The Rector, who had assumed a commanding position in front of the fire, thereby absorbing a good deal of badly-needed light, greeted Benedict kindly when he entered, and introduced him to Mrs. Adamson.

'This is Mr. Kavanagh. You remember my telling you that I had a letter from Canon Hamilton about him.'

She shook Benedict's hand, and inquired in a perfunctory manner how he liked Dunbeg. Like Pontius Pilate in Bacon's essay, she did not stay for an answer, but hurried off to talk to more familiar or more honoured guests.

Benedict proceeded to do what he conceived to be his duty. He had been provided with a card and a pencil with which to note the names of any towns he discovered concealed about his fellow-guests. He

wandered round the room staring, rudely he feared, at a number of strange people. Two middle-aged ladies, obviously quite uninterested in geography, suspended a conversation while he examined their badges. They bore the inspection patiently, but were evidently relieved when he went away and left them to finish their talk undisturbed. A group of girls, who seemed to Benedict very beautifully and grandly dressed, stood together in the centre of the room, and congratulated each other on the number of entries on their cards. Benedict did not dare to approach these very closely. He eyed them from a distance, and hoped that they would not catch him doing so. But this was little use to him. The girls moved so constantly and the light was so artistic that he found it quite impossible to get a clear view of their towns. The men of the party seemed very little interested in the business on hand, and were certainly disinclined to stand still to be looked at by a boy whom they did not recognise.

At last Benedict retired despondingly to a very dark corner behind the piano, having no more to enter on his card than Mr. McCreery's Dublin. Here Mr. Adamson, who seemed to have got much too hot in his position before the fire, found him.

'Guessed many?' he asked. 'No? Well, I haven't guessed a single one myself. I'm always the fool of games of this sort. But everybody else seems to enjoy them, so of course I join in. Look at this, now.' He held out a piece of paper pinned to the lappet of his coat. 'I don't believe anybody's guessed that. It's Capernaum. My wife didn't think it quite right to use a scriptural town, but it was the only one I could think of. Rather neat, the way I managed it. That is a cap. I drew it myself. It's not very like a cap, I'm afraid, but then it's not the least like anything else in the world, so people ought to be able to find out by a process of exclusion what it's meant for. The next thing is an urn—a tea-urn, you know. There's no possibility of any mistake

about it, for I cut it out of an illustrated price-list, and gummed it on after I had drawn the cap. Then I just printed AUM in large capital letters. I could not think of any other way of doing them; besides, I would not like to make the thing too hard. It wouldn't do, especially as the party is in my house. But, as I said before, nobody has guessed my town, so it would not have been any worse no matter how hard I had made it.'

'Thanks very much for telling me,' said Benedict, and made a second entry on his card.

'If I knew any more, I'd tell them to you with pleasure,' said the Rector. 'But I don't. Hallo, there's my wife making signs to me. I expect we're to go into the dining-room for tea now. Come along; we're sure to be wanted to hand round cake.'

Tea was not a very exhilarating or exciting meal. Two maids, somewhat rough-handed and high-coloured, but decked in very elaborately-frilled aprons, and caps with streamers of enormous length, stood behind a broad dining-room table handling two teapots. Benedict and the other males took the cups as they were filled, and handed them round the room. Afterwards they offered sugar and plates of cakes. On some of the plates were fine kinds of cakes, masterpieces of a Dublin confectioner's art, which reposed in little frills like wealthy babies in decorated cradles. There were also more solid kinds made by Mrs. Adamson herself, each slice yellow at the top and black with congregated currants lower down. The work of guessing the towns went on briskly, but in spite of the opportunities for observation afforded by assiduous service, Benedict did not succeed in adding any fresh names to his list. It did not gratify him that no one guessed his Trim, because no one tried. He wore no card, and therefore it was assumed that he had forgotten to bring one or that his imagination had failed him. He had not the courage to proclaim boldly, 'I am a town, though I do not look like one. My mystery, the supreme proof of my originality, lies

in the absence of any conventional symbol of my name. But look at my hair, my tie, my boots, and guess me if you can.'

After tea the cards which bore the evidence of the company's intellectual power were garnered in by Mrs. Adamson. Her husband, removed by his office from all suspicion of unfairness, counted the towns successfully entered on each list, and awarded two prizes—large boxes of chocolates, with handsome pictures on their lids—to the most successful competitors. Then Mrs. Adamson produced a naked wooden doll, a figure with joints capable, as she showed, of the most fantastic distortions, and a horrible red slit of a mouth, which leered in the face of everyone who looked at it. She announced, amid much laughter, that this was a booby prize to be awarded to the gentleman who had guessed fewest towns, and to be borne home in mock triumph by him.

Benedict blushed hotly at the sight of it. He felt convinced that no one could have made a smaller bag than his Dublin and Capernaum. He foresaw that he would have to carry the egregious wooden image in his arms, and that he would be unable to lay it down. He felt in anticipation the smiles on the women's faces and the broader grins on the men's. But Mr. Adamson, perhaps noticing his embarrassment, perhaps moved by a general impulse of pity for his sex, claimed the undesirable distinction, announcing shamelessly that he had guessed no towns at all.

Benedict returned to his lodgings in time for another tea with Mr. Doyne and Mr. Evans. They looked at him with suspicion when he entered, and were evidently not inclined to be friendly.

'Were you very much admired in that tie?' asked Mr. Evans.

Mr. Doyne made no sarcasm, but passed the loaf of bread with a chilly intimation that if Benedict wanted a slice he could cut one.

Benedict had not enjoyed his party very much. He had felt himself to be an outsider in a little group

of people who knew each other very well. He also realised that no one had particularly wanted to make his acquaintance, and that no one except his host and hostess had spoken to him. He wanted human companionship, friendliness, and the feeling that he need not be on his best behaviour. He wanted to talk—if possible, to laugh. He did not understand why his two companions were distant and cold in their manner. At his first introduction to them the day before they had been friendly. And he wished to be friendly with them, especially with Mr. Doyne, whose face attracted him strongly. He resented the coldness with which they received him now. Knowing that he had committed no fault, he attributed it to mere surliness in the other two.

In reality, they were neither surly nor offended, but shy and proud. Benedict had been invited to tea at the Rectory, had moved, as they thought, on equal terms with men and women of a class which deemed itself superior to the rest of people in Dunbeg. Neither Mr. Doyne nor Mr. Evans was admitted to the local tennis-club or invited to 'Town Tea' parties. They did not, indeed, specially crave for such social recognition, but they resented the suggestion of inferiority implied in their exclusion. They believed that Benedict, although he was no richer than they were, of no better manners, probably no more educated, would, because of the position conferred on him by an invitation to this party, look down on them. They were not prepared to claim friendship with a man who might patronise them. Therefore this tea, even more than the other, was an uncomfortable one for Benedict.

After it was over Mr. Evans played defiant dance music on his melodeon until his dog, maddened by the sound and craving for exercise, howled. Then, nodding good-night to his companions, he went out. Mr. Doyne, gathering his books, went to the Gaelic League class for which he had prepared himself the night before.

The force of the passions to which social distinctions give rise in Ireland has never been properly appreciated by the philosophers who have kindly undertaken to reason, in newspapers and elsewhere, about the condition of the country. Men and women do not hate each other because some of them accept the decrees of the Council of Trent and others do not, or because some hold that a Church is no Church without Bishops, while others regard mitres and lawn sleeves as a useless kind of ecclesiastical extravagance. Political differences may separate chief friends for a few weeks at election times, but enduring estrangements do not spring from divergence of opinion about the advantages of a Parliament in College Green. In Ireland a curious national history has created a class distinction which almost exactly corresponds to the lines of religious and political cleavage. Men of one particular creed and party claim—have indeed been almost forced to claim—a position of social superiority to everybody else in the country. The bitterness born of this claim is more potent in reality than either religious or political differences to keep Irishmen estranged from each other. It is possible to forgive a man for believing or not believing in the infallibility of the Pope. It does not seem possible to think kindly of him when he assumes that he is a gentleman and you are not. Unfortunately, the example set by one class has been imitated by every other. It will some day be recognised that the almost unintelligible quarrels of Irish local and national politics are often caused, always embittered, by the desire of one class to assert its equality with another.

But of all this Benedict was entirely ignorant. Puzzled, angry, and rebellious, he went upstairs, and unpacked from his box a book which he had purchased before leaving Dublin. It was a volume of Swinburne, the 'Songs before Sunrise.' It had been a very difficult book for Benedict to buy, for his salary as a junior clerk in Jeffars and Digby's Dublin office was a small one. A shilling now and then he was

able to spend on books, and the money went chiefly on cheap editions of the poets. There was in him a kind of hunger for beautiful words—a hunger not confessed to anyone, because it seemed to him a thing of which a young man should be ashamed. Once in a magazine article he had chanced upon a verse of Swinburne's, had been fascinated by the extraordinary sweetness of the melody, and intensely attracted by the vehement notes of self-assertion and rebellion. Unfortunately, there was no such thing as an edition of Swinburne to be had for a shilling.

Then came the news of his promotion to the Dunbeg office, and a present of money from Canon Hamilton. He was bidden to buy clothes with it, and he did so, refusing only to complete his outfit with a pair of gloves and a new hat. Instead, the very day he left Dublin he bought the Swinburne.

So now, in the town of Dunbeg, in the sitting-room provided by Mrs. Finlay for her lodgers, where surely no one had ever read Swinburne before, he opened the book. In a few minutes he was enthralled, intensely excited, outside himself with sheer joy at the rush and fall of melodious words. He read on, poem after poem, not pausing to seek for thought or meaning. He entirely forgot the stiff misery of the tea-party and the strange coldness of his companions. He passed into another world, lived a life of hot emotion, like the emotion created by Berlioz' music sweeping out from the strings and wood and brass and drums of an orchestra.

Mr. Doyne returned from his Gaelic League class.

'Listen to this,' said Benedict. It did not matter to him at the moment that Mr. Doyne had not cared to talk to him at tea-time. He wanted to speak the poetry aloud, to hear with his bodily ears the glorious words. Mr. Doyne listened puzzled. He knew nothing of Swinburne's poetry. Melody, words, tone, and what he gathered of the sense were all strange to him. They affected him, but not as they had affected

Benedict. He felt no such strong excitement, only a kind of fear and a desire to understand.

‘Read me some more of that,’ he said when Benedict ceased. ‘I have never heard poetry just like that before.’

Benedict began again where the poet invokes the various nations, asking each of them the question of the Hebrew prophet, ‘What of the night?’ As he did so, Mr. Evans entered.

‘I say, you fellows, what do you think Molly said?’

‘Hush!’ said Doyne. ‘Wait.’

Benedict read, swinging through the short lines, taking breath only here and there, and then quickly, in gasps, letting his voice strike strongly on the rhyme words and linger on the heavy middle syllables of the last line in each stanza. Mr. Evans gaped at the apostrophe of England; then fidgeted; finally in the next verse grinned broadly and interrupted:

“Hullo! that’s coming it a bit thick. It’s not decent, you know. You really ought to keep that sort of thing for private consumption. I wonder at you, Doyne, listening to him, and you a Gaelic Leaguer and all. Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves, the two of you, with an innocent young man like me in the room? Did you read that out at the tea-party this afternoon, Kavanagh? If you did, you’ll never be asked again.’

Benedict closed the book, and looked helplessly from one to the other. The question of decency had not occurred to him. He knew that what he read was poetry, and it did not seem to him that decency—the decency of ordinary conversational prose—had anything whatever to do with the matter. Mr. Evans, delighted with himself, pursued the subject.

‘Oh, Doyne, Doyne! I wonder you’re not blushing—you that’s so mighty particular, and won’t have an innocent song out of a music-hall sung anywhere. I’ll write about you to the newspapers. I remember you reading me an article about the low-down, vulgar

immorality of musical comedies. I'll write to that paper, and see what it'll say about you.'

'Don't make an ass of yourself,' said Doyne. 'You haven't the least idea what you are talking about. You don't understand.'

Evans grinned broadly. 'It would be better for you if you didn't understand.'

Doyne turned to Benedict.

'I'm not sure,' he said, 'that I do understand. Oh, I don't mean in the least what Evans means. I'm beginning to feel. It's like a good deal that's in my own mind. It's what I sometimes feel about Ireland. Why didn't he write another verse, "Ireland, what of the night?" We ought to give our answer to the question too. We've a better right to it than any of the others, for the night has been longer and darker for us.'

Benedict did not know what Doyne meant. It had not occurred to him to apply the poem and its teaching in any direct way to the circumstances of any people. He read it simply as poetry, as a splendid expression of vaguely magnificent ideas. But he was greatly pleased that Doyne had listened and appreciated. He had been attracted to the man from the first. Now he knew that there was in him a capacity for high emotion, for the feeling of great things. In his delight at the discovery of this possibility of union with Doyne, he forgot to be angry with Evans or contemptuous of his interruption.

Doyne, on his part, recognised that a young man who read such poetry in such a way could not be altogether tied and bound with social conventions. Even Evans forgave the invitation to the 'Town Tea.' He felt that he had got a subject on which his two companions could be rallied with great effect, when things were dull, or when he suspected either of them of disapproving of his favourite amusements.

CHAPTER IX

MR. DOYNE talked very often to Benedict, and read him scraps of old Irish legends, or sometimes translations of Gaelic poems. He spoke also of Father O'Meara, the priest who had just left Dunbeg, and had been the recipient of the address of which Benedict had read in the local paper. According to Mr. Doyne, this Father O'Meara was a very good man, and also in a certain way strong and great. It was evident that he had exercised a great deal of influence in Dunbeg. He had started the branch of the Gaelic League of which Mr. Doyne was secretary, and had set the young men and young women studying the Irish language. It had been a very wonderful thing, so Mr. Doyne said, to see a hundred and more students working at a language which was quite strange to almost all of them. They were of various classes. Some were very grand, sons and daughters of leading shopkeepers, young men in bright brown boots and neat tweed clothes, young women in gay blouses and skirts cut fashionably. Others, mere assistants, drapery salesmen, and milliners, were not less fine in their apparel, but meeker in demeanour, more diffident. Others, again, belonged to a lower social level still. Such were telegraph messengers, carters, and even domestic servants. All provided themselves with O'Growney's text-books. All struggled together through the earlier lessons about young cows and high wells. Some had attempted previously the study of some other strange language; had wrestled with the information about apricots, pens, ink, and the daughter of the gardener, which introduces the curious to the language of France; or the slaves of the husbandman and sailors of the queen, who meet the voyager at the outset of his journey

towards the poems of Horace; or the good red wine of the Anglo-German grammarians. Others, having attempted no language but English, found it less strange to begin acquiring knowledge at so commonplace an object as Father O'Growney's 'young cow.' For one whole session they struggled on enthusiastically, and just as the cleverer members of the class had reached the point of wondering whether 'Con O'Flanagan is in Ireland now,' a great misfortune happened. Father O'Meara left Dunbeg. No one supposed that he had gone willingly, and speculation was rife about the cause of his removal.

'But you will have heard what they are saying about him and Father Heatly,' said Mr. Doyne.

Benedict had not, and didn't want to. He was impatient of the constant praise of Father O'Meara, but was beginning to be interested in Mr. Doyne's curious enthusiasm for the Irish language.

There had followed, it appeared, a time of trial for the Gaelic League. Many of its members had wearied already of their studies, and openly declared their intention of getting some fun out of the thing. Mr. Doyne in no way disapproved of fun in general. He was convinced that Father O'Meara would have approved of concerts, plays, and dances. But he was also sure that the kind of concerts which were being arranged were not consistent with the true spirit of the League.

At first there was nothing he could actually object to. Copies of Moore's 'Melodies' were purchased by those who could sing. Others practised the art of recitation. Friday evenings were devoted to practices, and only Mondays and Wednesdays remained for the study of Irish. Then the idea of an amateur dramatic club was mooted by someone. Wednesday evenings were sacrificed to the rehearsal of a broad comedy which had many years previously delighted London audiences. Moore's melodies were found to be too classical for the audiences, and a youth scored an immense success with a song about a young couple

who tried to blow kisses to each other through a telephone. He found imitators, and a young lady secured a triple encore for a parody commencing 'Come back wi' your hair on, Mavourneen, Mavourneen.' A few of the sterner spirits of the League rebelled, and Mr. Doyne headed a deputation to the parish priest and the new curate. He pointed out that English songs, parodies of Irish melodies, and representations of drunken Irishmen were not likely to promote the Gaelic revival. Father Heatly, the parish priest, spoke soothingly, uttering large platitudes about the folly of forbidding innocent gaiety. Then Mr. Doyne and the other malcontents withdrew, announced formally that the Gaelic League had no connection with the concerts or plays, and established themselves in a new home.

There were not very many of them. The disused room above a watchmaker's shop which they rented was amply large enough to accommodate them. They furnished it with a few wooden chairs, a bare table, and an inferior lamp. Here they met, no longer three, but five evenings in the week. Their teacher possessed a competent speaking knowledge of the language, but unfortunately had no idea of how to teach. Now that Father O'Meara was gone it fell to Mr. Doyne's lot to arrange the lessons. The other members, though enthusiastic, were incapable of dealing with the situation. A country schoolmaster who walked in four miles to attend the classes might have been of some use if he had been available for consultation during the day. The others, prepared to do their best in learning, had no theories or schemes for the way the teaching should be done.

Of all these troubles and difficulties Benedict learned something from Mr. Doyne, and became interested in the League and its doings. He heard, too, more and more of the Irish legends, discovered Mangan's poetry, and found in his word music melody not less intoxicating than Swinburne's. He picked up one or two simple Irish phrases, forms of greeting

and farewell. Starting with the assumption that the study of Irish was, perhaps, a harmless, certainly a silly fad, he was amazed to find that the sentences he learned took hold of him in a wholly inexplicable manner. He added a few more words to his vocabulary. Finally, he allowed himself to be persuaded to go to one of the classes.

It was near Easter-time, almost the end of the season during which the classes are held. The teacher was beginning to be very weary of his work. He had spoken Irish since his boyhood, and could not understand the immense difficulty which his pupils found in learning it. The spirits of most of the class were flagging. Some, having struggled hard, and made, as it appeared, little progress, were almost in despair. Others were becoming interested in other things, and ceased to be regular in their attendance. The schoolmaster, though determined to persevere, had of late been distracted and inattentive. His wife, a young woman profoundly uninterested in anything but her children and the management of her house, had lately given birth to a fourth child. During her illness life for the schoolmaster became exceedingly complex and annoying. He had to wash and dress the three elder children, cook meals, sweep floors, and speak words of sympathy to his wife. His school demanded as usual the greater part of his day. The four miles' tramp to the Irish class became a heavy burden. It rained persistently, and night after night he returned dismally wet to a comfortless home. He was, therefore, of very little use in keeping up the enthusiasm of the teacher and the other students. That impossible task was left to Mr. Doyne.

Thus it happened that the class which Benedict attended was a singularly unattractive one. It commenced with an object-lesson, one of those arranged by Mr. Doyne after his study of the most approved methods of teaching languages.

'This is a book,' said the teacher, holding up the object.

'This,' repeated the class apathetically, and without looking at it, 'is a book.'

'What is this?' asked the teacher.

'What is this?' repeated the class.

'This is a book.'

'This is a book.'

'Put it on the table.'

'Take it up.'

'Hold it in your hand.'

The book was held aloft, laid down, opened, shut, read, handed to one and then another. Everything that could be done with a book was done to it, and the acts described in Irish. Every command at all applicable to books, and every suggestion that could be thought of, were given, made, and repeated about this book. The affair lasted, perhaps, ten minutes, and then the whole business began over again with a knife. Benedict's mind wandered. He found himself speculating as to why these men met at great inconvenience to practise saying in a language which scarcely any civilised people understood things which were quite unimportant and uninteresting. He did not in the least understand why, for instance, a carter who sat near him should deliver himself to this incredible toil. Life for such a man, life with a perpetually tired horse for a companion, life surrounded with sacks of flour and bounded strictly by a wage of ten-and-six-pence a week, life was surely hard enough and dull enough without adding to its monotony with ridiculous phrases about books and knives. Why should the man on the other side of him do it? Benedict knew him to be a draper's assistant. Such study was wholly incomprehensible in a draper's assistant. Not by such means do men rise from selling cheap stockings to owning cheap stockings and employing other men to sell them, and yet that was the kind of ambition he supposed to be proper to draper's assistants. Why should the realisation of so great a destiny be interfered with, as he thought it surely would, by the learning of Irish? Other lets and hindrances he could

understand. A quite intelligible draper's assistant might miss the greatness of his own name blazoned over the shop-front by following the distracting joys of farthing nap or billiard championships in the days of adolescence. It was possible to imagine a man failing of success through a fondness for porter, whisky, or betting. But why should any man, why should this man, above all, this anæmic, somewhat stupid, apparently unimaginative youth, with his sandy hair and pale eyes—why should he wander from the narrow way for the sake of learning Irish?

He awoke again to a sense of what was going on around him. The object-lesson had ceased. There was an interval for general conversation. The schoolmaster was struggling with a sentence, apparently a question. No one understood him. The teacher, evidently bored, but bent upon doing his duty, kept repeating:

‘Say it again slowly, if it be your will.’

The schoolmaster gave up the struggle, and made his request for information in plain English.

‘Is Eileen or Eveleen the proper Irish form of the name Ellen?’

No one in the class tittered, though it was obvious that the man's mind was running on the as yet unchristened babe at home. The idea of being the father of a baby naturally excites the mirth of the unmarried male. It did not move one of the students of Irish even to a smile. Their minds were fixed on higher matters. The uncomfortable ceremonies of child-birth stirred them to no derision of the man responsible. They were simply and seriously interested in the correct Irish form of a name for a young Irish girl. The teacher was voluble in explanation. Neither Eileen nor Eveleen could, in his opinion, be regarded as correct Irish. There was something between the two—the sound of a half-smothered *b* before the *l*, a compromised vowel sound. He pronounced the name, and his class followed him.

‘Is it Eivleen that you will be calling your child?’

he asked. 'The blessing of God and Mary on her, and may she have long life and bring happiness to the house she was born into!'

Mr. Doyne slowly repeated the benediction. Benedict felt curiously thrilled. The emotion which had touched him when he learned to greet Doyne with the words 'God bless you!' returned to him, rapt him, lifted him up. Religion itself, the actual communing of the soul with the eternal, affected him very little. The invocation of the name of God stirred him no more than it did in the prayers which Mr. Adamson read ponderously in the church. An appeal to the Virgin Mary in English would have awakened the prejudices of his education. But this Irish blessing, he understood it when Doyne repeated it slowly, the special form of the name Mary which the language has consecrated to the sole use of the Mother of God, the simplicity with which it was uttered, called up in him a sense of high romance. He felt the extraordinary destiny of the Gaels, was conscious of their age-long isolation, their continued refusal to accept an alien civilisation, their patient adherence to a creed which for ages was counted a badge of inferiority.

The genius of the people was in the language he listened to. The great world has not heard it for centuries. Science, philosophy, history, scholarship, theology itself, have spoken in other tongues. All that the modern world counts worth saying has been said, and no one word of it in this strange tongue which lingers on the lips of the peasantry along the desolate seaboard of the West. Yet among these people, preserved for them in their language, preservable by no other means except their language, dwells faith, the wonderful clear faith of the child, that belief in the reality and immanence of the eternal for which the great world sighs and craves in vain. Apologetic theologians, wooing science to be kind to them, look for it, and do not find it. Churches grow gorgeous and magnificent, art hypnotises the

worshippers within them, but this faith is far away. The world missed it, passed it by, despised it once, and since then cannot find it. It abides here shrined in a language that the world has never heard, among a people whom no one has understood, who have not cared to explain themselves. And along with faith there linger other things—the high emotion of great romance, a splendid indifference to small material matters, a lofty vision of life, a serious courtesy.

Strange feelings crowded in upon Benedict, and excited him tumultuously. A phrase formed itself upon his lips. 'It is the language of my heart.'

He no longer looked curiously at the men before him. It did not seem to him of any importance that one was no more than a carter, another pale-eyed. He neither searched for their motives nor wondered at their efforts to learn. No doubt it was the language of their hearts as it was of his. They sought in it the means of expressing thought and feeling within them which must otherwise burn, hurting and consuming them, or else perish for mere want of ability to become articulate. They might never learn it, he might never learn it, but to his life's end it must be what he felt it then—the language of his heart.

Mr. Doyne stayed after the class was over to wind up some accounts with the help of the schoolmaster. Benedict, walking home alone, found that the rain had ceased, and turned from the street, seeking solitude on the walk which lay along the side of the canal. He came upon Mr. Evans, teaching his dog to jump over a stick for the amusement of a girl. Benedict knew her, a pretty blond creature, the winner of encores at the concerts for a song still new in Dunbeg about one Rhoda, for whose name a rhyme had been found in 'pagoda.' She and Mr. Evans greeted him with delighted badinage.

'How is the Gaelic League getting on, Kavanagh?'

'I am glad I dropped that silly old Irish,' said the

girl. She had been one of Father O'Meara's students in the days when the League was fashionable.

'What did they teach you, Molly dear?' said Evans. 'Tell me, now. What's the Irish for "Give me a kiss, pretty girl"?' Maybe I'd say that to you now if you taught me nicely.'

'Be quiet, will you, Mr. Evans. It's a slap I'd give you if I gave you anything. Isn't that what he ought to be getting, Mr. Kavanagh? Kisses indeed! Who'd kiss the like of you?'

'It's you she wants, Kavanagh; I may as well go home. See what it is to be a good-looking young fellow and a clerk in an office. You'll have all the girls in the place running after you soon. There's Lizzie Finlay won't look at any of the fellows since she travelled with you in the train. And here's Molly now, my own best girl, talks of slapping me as soon as ever she sees you.'

'Get out, will you?' said Molly—a foolish remark, for the whole party was already in the open air. 'You keep talking so as no one but yourself can get a word said, and here's Mr. Kavanagh wants to tell us why he won't go next or nigh Lizzie Finlay, and her opening her eyes at him every time she meets him, and getting cross if anyone dares to as much as mention his name to her.'

They walked back together, and left Molly at the door of her lodging. She was a stranger in the town, and free from maternal supervision. Mr. Evans declared his intention of having a drink somewhere. Benedict returned home. Lizzie opened the door for him. No doubt she had done so a hundred times before, and no doubt he had seen her and spoken to her. Now he looked at her very curiously. High thoughts, the romance of the Celt, and the language of the heart, are certainly noble and inspiring things; but Benedict was not yet twenty-one years of age, and Lizzie Finlay was an exceedingly pretty girl. He looked at her with great interest. Miss Molly had been guilty of an under-statement in describing

Lizzie's habits. She did more than open her eyes at Benedict: she filled them with a remarkably attractive expression. For the first time since the afternoon at the junction she noticed an answering in Benedict's gaze. In a moment her lids dropped, and she fled down the passage, leaving him to shut the door.

CHAPTER X

DURING the spring and summer months the town of Dunbeg is a pleasant place to live in for anyone whose imagination does not impel towards the wilder and more extravagant forms of dissipation. Your opportunities for drinking champagne at anyone else's expense in Dunbeg are very few; but then you are not tempted to give extravagant feasts to your friends. No one can afford such pleasures except Lord Gauntly. He owns the town and the greater part of the country round about—so much of it that he lives in awful isolation. The magnitude of his possessions has created round him a kind of social solitude. He invites Mr. and Mrs. Adamson to dinner at rare intervals, for he is a nobleman with a strong sense of what is due to the clergy of his church. Otherwise he does not interfere in the life of the town. Occasionally deputations wait on him for subscriptions, which he gives, or with impossible requests, which he gravely promises to consider. It has always been doubtful whether the fiery resolution which popular bodies pass about him reach his ears at all, or whether he is conscious of the bituminous abuse with which minor politicians attempt to bespatter him in their speeches. For Lord Gauntly, therefore, Dunbeg is quite possibly dull, though even he may—one can only guess about such mysteries—find opportunity for strange, rare pleasures proper to potentates.

For people of every other class the town is a pleasant enough place of residence. It is difficult for anyone to make money in Dunbeg. Still, a few people are credited with having done so; and money-making, considered simply as a form of amusement, must be just as interesting in Dunbeg as it is in London or New York. If you prefer political eminence to mere riches, you can have it in Dunbeg. You may have to leave your shop dirty, your farm untilled, or your trade neglected, but you can, if you really want to, become a member of the Board of Guardians. Then it is open to you to make speeches and pass glorious resolutions, and your friends will read your great words in the local newspaper. If ambition urges you still further along the path of fame, you can be made an Urban District Councillor, and pass the same resolutions over again with renewed satisfaction.

The passing of resolutions is fast becoming, instead of fox-hunting and horse-racing, the most popular kind of sport in provincial Ireland. It ought to be encouraged more than it is by our rulers, because it does not involve any kind of cruelty or brutality, as the older sports did—no living thing is hurt or even frightened by a resolution—also because the demoralisation of the betting ring does not threaten those who enjoy it. The most speculative gambler would hesitate to lay a wager on the chance that a Board of Guardians will pass, or refrain from passing, a resolution on any subject under the sun. Resolutions have also an educative value. The student finds an interest in their natural history. They may be scientifically classified. There is, for instance, the circular or round robin resolution—a migrant, appearing in various parts of the country almost simultaneously, and passed by all Boards and Councils without question. It is brief, but fierce. The place of its origin is not always known. It preys upon any public enemy—that is to say, upon any prominent Irishman who has opinions of his own on any subject, and ventures to express them. There is also the

local resolution, a more brightly-coloured variety, and much longer. It is drawn up by some person of importance, copied out by its proposer, who enriches it with spelling mistakes and eccentric punctuation, and at last edited by the proprietor of a newspaper. There is finally the business resolution, a dull variety, but valuable to collectors on account of its rarity. It has no fine feathers, for the Councillor or Guardian, left to himself, which he very seldom is, shows a desire to get something done as quickly as possible, and wastes no time in elaborating a finely flamboyant style. The children in our national schools ought to be encouraged to make collections of resolutions. Properly framed with dark mouldings and mounted on gold grounds, they would give an air of quiet refinement to any home, besides being valuable models of English composition and object-lessons in the proper way of conducting public business, most useful to the rising generation.

But there are many people who prefer other amusements, not caring greatly for either wealth or fame. These cannot, indeed, play polo or race yachts, for no one in Dunbeg has money enough for such pursuits. Besides, the latter requires water of some kind, and there is none except the canal near Dunbeg. But there is a ball-alley, and lank hounds may be kept, which are useful for chasing hares on Sunday afternoons. Also in summer there are athletic meetings, which give pleasure for a day to those who attend them, and occupation for several weeks to the public-spirited who collect funds and do the work of organisation. For the members of the privileged upper class there is a tennis-club, very numerous tennis parties, gallons of tea to be drunk, and sometimes a dark-blue liquid called by the hostess claret-cup. But, of course, it is not everyone who is allowed to share in these delights.

Even for those who neither by birth nor accident belong to the classes which recognise themselves as upper, Dunbeg still holds possibilities of pleasure in

the summer-time. The canal has fish in it, for which you are permitted to angle. There is a spot far down it where bathing is possible. Several farmers in the neighbourhood allow friends to shoot rabbits on their land. It is possible to ride long distances over very bad roads on a bicycle, cursing the County Council all the time because it does not keep a steam-roller. On Sundays you can go to mass or to church—not to both, but to whichever of the two was decided to be best for you by some forgotten ancestor. Also you can go for a walk every evening, and if you are tolerably attractive can secure a member of the opposite sex for a companion. There are very nice walks round Dunbeg. There is, for instance, the canal walk, which is shady. There is also on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays Lord Gauntly's park, where are still shadier places and some charming seats so remote from the main avenues that only those whose companionship has ripened into actual flirtation ever seek them.

For all classes, except the remote Lord Gauntly, who must be reckoned a class by himself, there are the vivid joys of travelling circuses. Like the verse in the Book of Proverbs, their tents are places where rich and poor meet together. It is, of course, right and fashionable to scorn the skill of the spangled lady who climbs a ladder without leaning it against any kind of wall, and to express boredom at the thought of witnessing the trick cyclist or the man who keeps an incredible number of plates spinning at the same time. Still, everybody goes, paying the circus proprietor sums varying from two shillings to threepence—not according to length of purse, but to each man's estimate of his own social importance. Circuses only come in summer, which is unfortunate but cannot be helped; for no spotted or piebald horse could drag a wooden shed over, or rather through, the roads in winter time.

Benedict, though he might perhaps have aspired to an uneasy membership of the tennis-club, chose to

decline to the social level of those who merely go for walks after their work is done. Mr. Adamson, who took an interest in the boy, remonstrated. He feared that Benedict would get into bad company, perhaps take to drink, perhaps entangle himself with some undesirable lady friend. The warnings were kindly received, for Benedict was not seriously attached to Lizzie Finlay, and rarely if ever went into a public-house. But later on, when Mr. Adamson warned him against his growing intimacy with Doyne, Benedict grew angry.

‘I don’t see why I shouldn’t make friends with any man I like,’ he said.

‘My dear boy, I’m only speaking for your own good. Mr. Doyne is well known to be a member of the Gaelic League, and it’s most unwise of you to make friends with a man of that kind. Your employers won’t like it. In fact, I may tell you that Mr. McCreery has asked me to warn you on the subject. He doesn’t want to get you into trouble, but an intimacy with a man like Mr. Doyne will have to be reported to your superiors.’

It is certainly in some ways a disadvantage to a man to be brought up in an intensely Protestant and Orange atmosphere. Self-will and independence are liable to develop to an alarming extent, and to show themselves in very undesirable ways. The suggestion of a threat of any kind drives a man educated in such surroundings into open defiance, and opposition merely intensifies his determination to go his own way. In most parts of Ireland independence and defiance of authority get men into serious trouble. It is much wiser to submit, deprecate threatenings, and afterwards, if you really want to do the forbidden thing, to do it unostentatiously. But men educated as Benedict had been never learn wisdom. Their feathers erect themselves and rattle, their heads grow crimson at the very idea of being forced to do or forbear. Mr. Adamson did not know this, nor would he have understood it if it had been explained to him.

He was a popular man in Dunbeg, and in order to be popular a man must respect what he supposes to be other people's opinions much more than he respects his own.

Benedict, joining the first gentle admonition to the second one which offended him, made up his mind to disregard them both. He made no secret of his friendship with Doyne, and occasionally, without indeed enjoying it greatly, went out for a walk with Lizzie Finlay.

It was, indeed, inevitable that he would go for walks with her when the days got really fine. The girl, since her return from school, had proved in some ways a disappointment to her mother. She could by no means be persuaded to do a fair share of the housework. Pretty Miss Lizzie had not learned such fine arts as playing the piano and doing ribbon-work in order to spend her time handling the broom of the housemaid or washing greasy plates when young men had dined off them. She displayed, however, a remarkable aptitude for trimming hats, and even plaiting strips of green and blue paper into the foundations which the trimmings adorned. She explained to her mother that many pounds would be saved annually by her skill, a statement which would have been true, for milliners' charges are notoriously excessive, had it not been that she made and trimmed an immense number of hats. Each, no doubt, taken singly, and compared to a similar hat purchased in a shop, represented a considerable saving; but the materials used for the whole number cost more than any milliner in Dunbeg would have charged for the two or three hats which ought to have contented Lizzie. Still, her hats were a source of pride to her mother, and the girl was almost always willing to iron her own blouses, smoothing and curling their lace frills so that they looked very pretty indeed.

Having such hats and such blouses, being conscious also of the beauty of her eyes and complexion, the symmetry of her figure, and the grace of her way of

walking, it was natural, indeed wholly necessary, that Lizzie should display herself and be admired. It was natural also that a general admiration, the indiscriminate approval of the crowd, should not wholly satisfy her. She required besides one special worshipper, who should be all her own. She chose Benedict, and the longer he remained unconscious of the honour she laid on him the more desirable he became. From the night when he first became aware that she 'opened her eyes at him' her progress with him was up to a certain point, if not rapid, at least assured.

As the days lengthened Lizzie's toilettes blossomed into fuller beauty, and Benedict felt her attractiveness more and more. It was in vain that Doyne spoke of the swan sorrows of the Children of Lir, or grew oratorical over the Cucullain romances. Such things befitted winter nights, and the long dullness of grey skies and windy rains. Benedict was young, and the sun of summer shone on him. He gradually forsook Doyne's high ways of life, and went more frequently for walks with Lizzie. They were dull, uncomfortable walks at first, for Benedict was shy, and wholly inexperienced. He had no idea what to talk to the girl about, or how to please her. Yet for a while Lizzie was satisfied. It was an achievement to have attracted Benedict. An office clerk, even if he be not a member of the tennis-club, is superior to the shop assistants, with whom most girls had to be content. There was a pride in leading him through the streets to the canal walk or further afield to the park, even though the actual fruition of his company proved time after time disappointing. But as the weeks went on the mere joy of possession grew stale, and Lizzie earnestly desired to break down the barrier of extreme propriety which Benedict's shyness interposed. He liked her; she knew that by the woolly softness of his eyes. He was getting to like her more and more. Sometimes she felt half-frightened, half-shy with him. Yet he never said nice things to her, never gave her

the chance of chiding him for forwardness. Then suddenly, as it seemed to Lizzie unaccountably, a change came over him. They were walking down the main street together, and Evans, having his dog with him, stopped them and spoke.

‘That’s a beautiful hat you have on this evening, Miss Finlay.’

‘Is it only the hat you admire, Mr. Evans?’

‘Indeed, then, I would not like to be making you blush by saying what I think of the face that’s under it.’

‘It’s not what you could say that would make me blush, anyway. You think a deal too much of yourself, Mr. Evans, so you do.’

A small group of loungers at the door of a neighbouring shop tittered appreciatively. Mr. Evans was on his mettle. He was not to be beaten by any girl at a game of this kind.

‘Well, then, I’ll say this: a prettier face under a prettier hat isn’t to be found in the town of Dunbeg to-day. And I never tasted a sweeter kiss than the one you gave me coming home from the concert the week before Christmas.’

‘Oh, oh, oh!’ cried Lizzie, blushing deeply now, to the immense delight of Mr. Evans. ‘I never gave you a kiss. I never did. I wouldn’t. Don’t believe him.’ She appealed to the group at the shop door. ‘I never did—never. Don’t believe a word he says, Mr. Kavanagh. Oh, how could you say such a thing?’

She hurried on, followed by Benedict. Nobody who listened to the conversation believed in the kiss for a moment. The Irish girl, even if she is vain and silly, does not give kisses promiscuously to chance acquaintances. It was well understood that Evans had simply got the better of her in a contest of delicate wit. Even Benedict knew enough to feel sure that Evans did not intend to be believed. Yet the accusation excited him strangely. The way in which Lizzie received it awakened thoughts in him. Reaching a

secluded corner of the park, he suddenly put his arms round her and kissed her cheek.

Lizzie turned on him with a face flaming with indignation. She gave him a slap on the ear which startled him.

‘Take that for your impudence,’ she said.

Then she ran from him. Leaving the path, she sped across the grass among the lime-trees, forgetting all about the threatening notices which Lord Gauntly had posted up warning wayfarers not to stray from beaten roads. Benedict stood stupefied. He had not desired to kiss her very much. But the act had been pleasant enough for the moment. He wished to repeat it, to repeat it frequently with her consent. But his ear tingled, for Lizzie had struck hard. He became very hot, so hot that his forehead and hands were damp. Then despair made him shiver. No doubt his companionship with Lizzie was over now. She was very angry at his audacity, and would never speak to him again. He wondered whether the kiss were an actual outrage, an unpardonable insult to the girl. He had heard vaguely, read in comic papers of kisses as light things, exchanged casually, not to be regarded as crimes. He supposed that all girls were occasionally kissed, and liked being kissed. He had no experience. He feared now that he had committed something worse than a blunder. He looked up, and stared in surprise to see that Lizzie had not fled far. She stood among the trees not fifty yards away from him, and her face was turned in his direction.

Could it be that he was expected to pursue her? Had he blundered in standing still? Hope revived in him. Perhaps, after all, she was not angry; perhaps even not unwilling to be kissed again, after proper resistance, such as would save her dignity. He wished that he had run after her at once, and taken speedy revenge for that tingling slap upon the ear. Now it was difficult to run. How could he chase hurriedly a girl who waited for him quite calmly,

whom he had neglected to chase at all for at least two minutes? He walked towards her, walked slowly and awkwardly. His face had the puzzled expression which a setter's wears when he is called to heel, and is uncertain whether to expect kind words or blows. The desire of kissing her again awoke in him. He tried to adjust a plan of action. Still puzzled, he arrived beside her. She spoke first.

'We ought not to be here on the grass. The old man'—it was thus that she spoke of Lord Gauntly—'is very particular about the grass, and if any of the men were to come by and tell on us he would have us kept out of the park for the rest of the summer. That would be awful, wouldn't it?'

Benedict was immensely perplexed. She had run on to the grass, and all but beckoned him to follow. Now she spoke as if the blame for their position were altogether his. Her manner towards him was distantly polite, but not unfriendly. She ignored the kiss he had snatched. He did not know what to say to her. The possibility of kissing her again seemed utterly remote. They turned and walked together back to the path they had left. Arrived there safely, they went towards home. Lizzie kept a space between them, a space of about a yard. Clearly, she had no idea of being surprised again. But she did not mean to walk home in silence.

'The leaves of the lime-trees are a very pretty colour at this time of year,' she said.

Benedict agreed that they were.

'So pale and transparent.'

'They are, indeed,' said Benedict.

He felt more awkward than he had ever been before, and he threw great fervour into his reply.

There was another pause, during which they walked fifty yards or more.

'But the beech-trees are prettier in autumn.'

Benedict failed to reply.

'Especially the copper beeches. Don't you think so?'

Benedict grunted. He began to suspect that Lizzie was laughing at him. He did not understand what she had to laugh about. He did not like being laughed at.

'I beg your pardon,' she said, although she must have distinctly heard his grunt. 'I did not catch what you said.'

'They are,' said Benedict sulkily.

'What are?'

'Beech-tree leaves. No, I mean to say lime-tree leaves, in spring and autumn.'

Lizzie burst into a merry laugh.

'I don't believe you've been listening to a word I've said. You're a nice person to take out for a walk. I must say I think you might pretend to be a little polite, even if you don't feel it.'

They reached the park gate, and found there Evans in conversation with a friend. He may have been telling the story of his passage with Lizzie. At all events, the subject seemed to be uppermost in his mind.

'Miss Finlay,' he said confidentially, 'I won't tell anyone about that kiss. I won't indeed. I wouldn't be so mean.'

Miss Lizzie's little chin was up in the air. She stalked past him without looking in his direction. She spoke no more, not even about leaves, until they reached home. Then in the passage she turned to Benedict.

'Good-night, Mr. Kavanagh. Wasn't it a beautiful evening? I hope nobody saw us in the park. I mean, when we were on the grass. It would be too bad to be turned out and not able to go there again all summer.'

It appeared that no one had observed their breach of Lord Gauntly's regulations; but it was some time before they took their next walk together in the park.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY in August Mr. Doyne went for his holiday. He spent the first week of it at a great gathering of Gaelic Leaguers in Dublin. Intercourse with kindred spirits so whetted his desire to master the Irish language that he voyaged to the Arran Islands, and there spent the remainder of his holiday.

Mrs. Finlay took advantage of his absence to admit two new lodgers to her house. She apologised to Benedict.

'I know I've no right to be letting Mr. Doyne's room,' she said; 'but this is a very nice gentleman, and he's only here for a week. I thought you wouldn't mind his having Mr. Doyne's bed in your room. He's all the way from America, and he's a—well, now, if I haven't forgotten what he said he was. But anyway, his card's inside in the sitting-room. He put it up over the chimneypiece himself, and it's on it what he is. He has his son with him, and a very proper young gentleman he seems to be. He's to sleep in Mr. Evans's room, and he says he does not mind the dog nor the melodeon. He's musical himself, and sings beautifully. I heard him as he was unpacking his bag. Of course, I ought not to be letting Mr. Doyne's room, and him paying for it while he's on his holidays. He always was one to do the right thing without grumbling about it. But I couldn't refuse the strange gentleman, after him coming all the way from America—could I now?—and him a professor and all to that; though maybe it wasn't a professor he said he was. But anyway, it's written on his card inside what he is, as I was telling you, though the gentleman himself is out. He went out as soon as ever he had had his dinner, and his son with him, and said he'd be back for his tea at six.

And not a thing he took to drink but water, just like Mr. Doyne, and him after travelling. And I thought that maybe he might be learning the Irish too; for none of the gentlemen that comes to talk to Mr. Doyne about the Irish ever sends out for as much as a bottle of porter itself. Though, indeed, that's not likely, seeing he comes from America, and is a professor, if it is a professor he said he was.'

Benedict escaped into the sitting-room. Mrs. Finlay's confidences, at first amusing, had lately bored him. He found it pleasanter to have the door opened for him by Lizzie. The promised card descriptive of the stranger was plainly visible beneath the cigarette pictures which still traced 'M. F.' above the chimney-piece. Benedict took it up and read it.

'Dr. Elias Smithson—Chicago,' and then, 'Lecturer and optical lanternist.'

Beside the card lay a green handbill. 'All the way from America,' ran across the top in large letters. Then, punctuated with notes of exclamation, which increased in number as the words were repeated: 'To-night! To-night!! To-night!!! To-night!!!!' Then came, modestly in smaller letters: 'Dr. Elias Smithson will lecture, with magnificent optical lantern illustrations, on life in the Fiji Islands, at eight o'clock p.m., in '—the name of the place was filled in with pen and ink, and looked insignificant—'the Parochial Hall.' The notice wound up with the amazing announcement: 'Admission free.' Finally, in small capitals, emphasised with the letters 'N.B.,' came: 'No smoking allowed during the lecture.'

Benedict pondered the announcement, and wondered vaguely why Dr. Smithson should have come all the way from Chicago, dragging a no doubt cumbersome optical lantern about with him, in order to lecture the inhabitants of Dunbeg without fee or reward. He recollected that early in the spring a stranger, also with a lantern, had lectured gratuitously on Canada. Doyne had fiercely denounced this man as an emigration agent disguised in the

skin of a public entertainer, but bent on seducing from the shores of Ireland her few remaining children. Perhaps Dr. Elias Smithson wanted to persuade people to leave their homes and settle in the Fiji Islands. The original inhabitants, Benedict believed, were cannibals, and it seemed possible that the population had been so eaten down that a few Irishmen were wanted to save the survivors from famine. He quite understood that many wise men might consider this as the most useful function the Irish were likely to perform in the world. He wondered what Doyne would say when this new plot came to his knowledge. Very great anger, he felt, would be quite justified. The Canadian man had held out baits to the people—free farms of many acres in extent. Large tracts of land could hardly be offered in the Fiji Islands. Perhaps Dr. Smithson would dwell on the delights of bananas provided free by the Government, or a supply of fresh cocoanut-milk guaranteed to every settler who brought a wife and children with him. Benedict made up his mind to go and hear the lecture.

At about half-past five Dr. Smithson and his son came in. The doctor was a small, exceedingly alert, bright-eyed man. He shook hands with Benedict without going through any ceremony of introducing himself. He smelt strongly of acetylene gas, from which Benedict concluded that he had been experimenting with his optical lantern. The son was a lank youth, much taller than his father, and had the appearance of being extremely tired and dejected. He greeted Benedict at first with a nod, but after he had deposited on the table two apparently heavy brown paper parcels, he also shook hands. Dr. Smithson chatted so pleasantly and smiled in so benevolent a manner that Benedict came to think it impossible that he could have entered into an unholy compact with cannibals. After tea he unpacked the parcels, bringing out two large wooden boxes fastened with broad brass bands.

‘These,’ he said, ‘are my slides for to-night’s

lecture. They are certainly finer than any slides yet shown in Europe. The photographs were taken by a friend of mine long resident in the Islands, and they are all coloured by a native artist whose talent for such work is amazing—simply amazing.'

Underneath the boxes of slides were two books. One he handed to his son; the other he laid reverently on the chimney-piece.

'This,' he said, 'contains my marching orders.'

The book was obviously a Bible, considerably the worse for hard wear, and kept shut by a broad elastic band, like a garter. Benedict revised his opinion of Dr. Smithson. The man was evidently the agent of some missionary society. Dr. Smithson noticed his glance at the Bible, and with a curious quickness of perception guessed at the train of thought which was passing through his mind. 'Admission to my lectures is entirely free,' he said, 'and there will be no collection at the end. I am thankful to say that, through the generosity of a noble Irishman—and I do not call him noble merely because he possesses a title—I am saved from the necessity of asking the public to support my work.'

Benedict felt that something in the way of an appreciation of this Irishman's generosity was expected of him.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that he is very much interested in the Fiji Islanders.'

'Oh no,' said Dr. Smithson cheerfully, 'not particularly. In fact, I don't suppose he knows anything about them except what he heard at one of my lectures. What Lord Telltown—he is the nobleman I refer to—is really interested in is the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of the Irish people.'

'Dear me!' said Benedict. He was conscious that he had heard of Lord Telltown before, but was not sure what he had heard.

'That is why he has engaged me to make this tour. For I am going all round Ireland, north, south, east,

and west—especially west, where the people seem to need instruction most of all.’

‘Instruction about the Fiji Islands?’ said Benedict, puzzled, but still clinging to his missionary hypothesis.

‘Certainly, about Fiji and other things; about temperance, for instance, and cleanliness and industry. Now, my second lecture is about a sailor’s life in many climes, polar, tropical, and temperate.’

This seemed an odd collection of subjects. Benedict became more resolved than ever to hear the lecture.

‘Here’s a copy of Lord Telltown’s paper, *The Watchman on the Hill*. But perhaps you’ve seen it. No? Well, keep it. I can get another. It contains an account of my last week’s work, and an article on the objects of the tour by Lord Telltown himself. I hope you’ll come to the lecture to-night. I understand that you are a Protestant. Mr. Adamson, the respected and liberal-minded Rector of this parish, told me so when I mentioned that I meant to lodge here. Come yourself, and bring your friends. All are welcome.’

Benedict said that he intended to be present, but had very little hope of bringing Mr. Evans along with him.

Mr. Adamson’s Parochial Hall had originally been a schoolroom. It was promoted to its new dignity because there was no longer a sufficient number of Protestant children in Dunbeg to give occupation to a schoolmaster. It was more than half full when Dr. Elias Smithson commenced his lecture. To Benedict’s surprise, at least one-third of the people present were Roman Catholics. This was unusual, but not wholly unprecedented. The hall was used for religious or semi-religious functions, such as temperance meetings and parochial tea-parties. On such occasions no Roman Catholic would have thought of entering it, nor would the Protestants have expected or wished to see them there. In Ireland there is a

sense of decency in religious matters. Men no more think of investigating their neighbours' modes of devotion than of invading the privacy of their bedrooms. Occasionally, however, the hall was used for purely secular entertainments, such as the concerts which Mr. Adamson organised laboriously in the hope of making five or ten pounds for some good object. To these Roman Catholics came willingly, it being always understood that they were at liberty to retire before the singing of 'God save the King'—a tune which for some reason is regarded as dangerous to the morals of Irish people.

The curious student of human nature may speculate on the fact that the people who dread this tune as if it were an infectious disease gladly pay those whom they deem wisest and worthiest to go to Westminster, and there swear an oath of allegiance to the same King for whose honour the hated music exists. It is therefore obvious that it is the tune itself, and not the sentiment expressed by the words, which the Irish people detest. Perhaps if a competent musician were employed to set the words to a new tune, the Members of Parliament, elected magistrates, and their supporters would sing their loyalty as readily as they now swear it. Of course, there are serious objections to such a plan. The Irish Unionists would be greatly aggrieved by its adoption. They are very fond of the present tune, and the oftener they get the opportunity of singing it the better they are pleased. A new tune, if approved by the Nationalist Parliamentary party, could never be really dear to them, because when they sang it on public occasions they would no longer irritate anyone, and it is no use singing unless you succeed in making somebody angry. The mere fact of the words being identical with those now used would afford them little satisfaction. A war-cry is a vain thing if the enemy also shouts it. There are besides a few Irishmen who will neither sing nor swear allegiance. A new tune would not satisfy them in the least. But it is hardly worth

while considering these. They are unworthy of being reckoned with either of the greater political parties, ought not to be counted as Irish politicians at all, for their position is stupidly logical. In any case, they are wholly uninteresting. As Browning points out, it is not the superstitious nobleman or the free-thinking Gigadibs who excites our admiration. They are intelligible. What the philosophic public likes to gape at is the Bishop himself, whose attitude no ordinary man can understand.

Dr. Smithson's lecture proved an exceedingly interesting one, and the audience was greatly delighted with the pictures. His friend had used his camera with discretion, and the native artist who did the colouring was evidently a man of very remarkable talent. There was no hint from beginning to end of any desire on the part of the lecturer to improve the condition of the Fijians either morally or materially. He did not even appear to think it desirable that they should wear more clothes than were shown in the pictures, and he regarded the custom of tattooing rather in the light of a joke than as an evidence of serious moral depravity. Evidently Elias Smithson was not a missionary.

The lecture closed with an announcement that another would be delivered on the following evening, and a warm invitation to those present to return, bringing their friends with them.

'To-morrow's lecture is entitled "A Sailor's Life,"' said Dr. Smithson; 'and there will be neither a charge for admission nor a collection made from those who attend.'

The fame of the evening's entertainment spread the next day through Dunbeg. The people were just at the time feeling oppressed with the dullness of life. There had been several wet evenings in succession, so that walks had been impossible or uncomfortable. No travelling circus had been near the place for weeks. The man who owned delightful hobby-horses and swinging-boats had departed. A great many people

made up their minds to profit by the description of the sailor's life. Lizzie Finlay, though not usually eager to avail herself of educational advantages of any kind, asked Benedict to take her to hear Dr. Smithson. Mr. Evans made one of the party, and brought his friend Molly with him.

The pictures of the sailor's life were attractive and very startling. Immense storms raged round his ship, threatening her with destruction. Water-spouts appeared after the storms were over. Albatrosses, sharks, whales, and other marine monsters fluttered or gambolled on the screen. An iceberg, inhabited by a polar bear, several barrels, and a broken boat swam into view. The vessel caught fire by night, and by cunning manipulation of the optical lantern burnt visibly before the audience. The crew, including the hero of the narrative, rowed away in boats. Afterwards they were reduced to living on a raft and drawing lots—this was an awe-inspiring scene—which of them would be eaten first. Then the hero appeared, bereft of his shoes and stockings and coat, waving what seemed to be his night-shirt to attract the attention of a very distant ship. The lecture was interspersed with nautical songs. Dr. Elias Smithson's son sang them, and invited the audience to join in the choruses. The tunes were very inspiring and easy to sing, so after a time the people accepted the invitation, merely humming at first, then with increasing confidence singing louder than their soloist himself. When the final scene was reached, and the hero, perched upon the bowsprit of a full-rigged ship, was observed waving the same night-shirt to an elderly female who stood near a lighthouse, the whole audience yelled the song of his home-coming. It had, indeed, a wholly irresistible tune, and the words of it were easily learned. The Smithsons, father and son, sang them through once, and then they appeared on the screen beside the hero's ship, which was moved over a little to the right to make room for them.

'Cast out the anchor, for the tide runs high.
Cast out the anchor, for there's tempest in the sky.
Cast out the anchor, lest we drift upon the shore.
Cast out the anchor, for we're home once more.'

In the third and following verses of the song there was an evident tendency to allegorise the anchor, the tide, the tempest, and the home. The thing lost the character of a nautical ditty, and grew into a kind of hymn. But the audience, if aware of the change, did not seem to care in the least. They were captivated by the perfect obviousness of the sentiment and the ravishing nature of the tune. They roared full-throated every time the chorus was reached, dwelling on the 'home once more' with a heart-rending drawl. It was not until they had responded four or five times to their own shouts of encore that they were content to let the chorus die finally away. Then the gas was turned up, and Dr. Smithson, blinking benignantly, offered to lecture again the following evening. He announced his subject as 'Pokes in the Fire.'

The town resounded till a very late hour with vociferous demands to cast out anchors. Groups of boys and girls marched in step along the streets shrieking the popular chorus. An impromptu band came together, and the tune was played by three melodeons and six combs wrapped in paper, backed by a considerable number of powerful whistlers. Dr. Elias Smithson, retiring to rest, opened the window of the bedroom which he shared with Benedict in order to drink to the full of the delightful sounds.

No one who had been privileged to hear about the Fiji Islanders and the adventures of the sailor was willing to miss the third lecture. The title itself was a seductive enigma. It was impossible to guess beforehand what anyone could find to say on a subject so homely and tame. But it was generally felt that a man so gifted as Dr. Smithson would

certainly have something original, perhaps amusing, to tell about fires, and the way to poke them to the best advantage. In any case, there would be pictures, and most likely more songs.

Benedict and his party arrived twenty minutes before the time fixed for the lecture, and even so only secured seats with the greatest difficulty. The unfortunate people who were merely punctual had to go home again disappointed.

It appeared very early in the lecture that the subject was not going to be treated in a comic manner. Dr. Smithson in his opening sentences took his stand upon a lofty place, and dashed the hopes of his audience by explaining that the fire he proposed to deal with was that spiritual flame mentioned, though Dr. Smithson did not refer to the passage, by Matthew Arnold in one of his best-known poems as 'the fire within.' This fire burns, so the audience was assured, in every man who breathes the breath of life. But it is liable to burn low, or even to be totally extinguished in some individuals. Here Dr. Smithson threw upon the screen pictures of human depravity, such as extreme drunkenness, and told stories about the revival in such case of the almost extinct Divine flame by means of vigorous poking. Generally the poking took the form of exhortations delivered at critical moments by unexpected persons, such as very young children. There were also songs, but these had more and more the character of hymns. The audience became very uncomfortable. The Protestants—there were only a few of them present, for most of them, unaccustomed to find their hall crowded, had come too late to obtain seats—felt that the lecture was becoming a kind of sermon, and that their Roman Catholic neighbours had been brought there under false pretences. Hymns, like China tea and vegetarian dishes, are excellent for those who are accustomed to them, but no right-thinking man wishes to force them upon friends who are used to

some other kind of spiritual diet. The Roman Catholics were uneasy, not because they had any objection to what the lecturer was saying, but because they were uncertain how far Father Heatly would approve of their receiving moral instruction from an unauthorised teacher. A few whose piety was of a militant kind left the room ostentatiously and noisily. A few more, in a spirit of bravado, afterwards repented, continued to join vigorously in the choruses of the hymns. Most fidgeted uncomfortably, and hoped that things would not get any worse before the end.

Dr. Smithson, although he could scarcely have been unconscious, even in the darkened room, of the extreme discomfort of his audience, continued to poke with great zeal and earnestness every kind of fire which could be suspected of burning low. Nor did he seem the least distressed afterwards by the doubtful reception of this final lecture. He discussed the situation very frankly with Benedict while they were undressing to go to bed.

‘I think they took the lecture very well to-night. It has been most interesting. Nothing in my experience of America has proved so interesting as this Irish tour. The people are not really bigoted. Of course, I never attempt anything in the way of controversy. That would be quite foreign to my purpose. I simply want to put plain moral truths before the people in a plain way, so that they can understand them. I only speak of matters on which Roman Catholics and Protestants are agreed.’

There was nothing unctuous about the way the man spoke. He appeared to be entirely sincere, and to be quite convinced that he was doing a most valuable work. Perhaps he was. Benedict speculated upon the matter.

Ireland offers a peculiarly attractive sphere of work for people with a taste for improving their neighbours. Once in every eighteen months or so, an enterprising foreigner of some kind—generally an

Englishman, occasionally an explorer from the Continent—discovers Ireland. He is always struck by the fact that the people—all classes of the people—require to be improved. He goes home and writes a book or an article, according to the time at his disposal, in which he describes to a wondering world the Irish people and their country. In an appendix or a footnote he explains the reforms which are necessary. Thus is the intellect of the civilised world applied to the Irish question. Then comes someone else, who wants to put the plans of the intrepid explorer into operation. This man or woman is not usually intellectual, but has an excellent heart. Sometimes he or she collects money, and allows it to be spent in Ireland. Sometimes he worries the officials, already worried enough, who are engaged on the pleasing task of trying to administer the excellent laws made by the English Parliament in a country which they don't seem to suit—a task not unlike that of a man who has to wrap an indiarubber ball up in brown paper neatly and tie it with string, or the penance imposed by Fate a few years ago on dull people, who were obliged to go on rocking in their hands little boxes with glass lids until tiny beads in them dropped into awkwardly situated holes. Sometimes he goes straight to the people of Ireland and lectures them, either individually on roadsides and in their houses; or in masses, advertising his good intentions, in public buildings. So one meets the philanthropic Englishman who has taken a fishing in the west, and brought with him, besides his fly-book, the works of one or more of the intellectual explorers. He spends the days which are hopeless for fishing, and his wife spends all her days, in convincing the natives of something—perhaps the value of the science of hygiene, perhaps the advantage which would accrue to Ireland if the people would only vote, like sensible men, for one or other of the English political leaders. These go away happy in the consciousness that they have done

good. Afterwards, the Irish people behave in every respect exactly as they did before. We are too polite to spoil the pleasure of kindly strangers by reasoning with them, and we long ago realised the impossibility of persuading the peripatetic philanthropist that there are other kinds of wisdom in the world besides that patronised by the Anglo-Saxon.

The case of lecturers like Dr. Elias Smithson, who deliver their exhortations in public, is different. The ardent reformer ought not to adopt this method of spreading his ideas in Ireland if he can possibly avoid it. For he must, of necessity, deliver his message either under Roman Catholic or Protestant patronage, because there is no such thing in provincial Ireland as a public building which is not under the control of one church or other. He therefore starts by incurring the hostility of the clergy whose protection he has not invoked. He may, indeed, succeed in drawing an audience composed of members of both churches for a night or two; but sooner or later his wiles will be discovered, and a stop will immediately be put to his proceedings. In any case, the public lecturer effects no more by his efforts than the private philanthropist. We listen to him tolerantly until our religious or political leaders tell us not to listen any more. We are interested in what we hear; but we never dream of taking his teaching seriously. We may occasionally stone a lecturer of this kind, in order to prove our attachment to our faith, but, as a rule, we do not feel that it is our business to impress the duty of modesty on the good, earnest men who come to us and pose as apostles of a superior civilisation. If they think they are wiser and better than we are, we can't help it. Perhaps they are right; but, right or wrong, we don't believe them, and when we treat them with amused toleration we are treating them as well as can reasonably be expected.

CHAPTER XII

ON the morning after the 'Pokes in the Fire' lecture, Dr. Elias Smithson departed, no doubt to sow the knowledge of the Fiji Islands, temperance, cleanliness, and the seafaring life, broadcast in other Irish towns. In Dunbeg his efforts, so far as could be ascertained, resulted only in Benedict Kavanagh's receiving notice from Mrs. Finlay that he must look out for other lodgings.

Father Heatly, the parish priest of Dunbeg, was a strong man who was entirely devoted to the task of preserving undefiled the faith and the morals of his flock. No toil wearied him if the voice of duty urged him to it. No detail was too small to escape his notice. Opposition, when it was offered, merely served to stimulate the splendid courage with which he faced the world. Such men always have enemies, and Father Heatly's enemies described him, in private, as a busybody of the most objectionable kind. But it is better, in estimating a man's character, not to listen to his enemies. They cannot know him as well as he knows himself, or even as well as his friends know him. Father Heatly's friends spoke very highly of him on all public occasions, and it is certain that what they said struck him as entirely true.

Like every cleric in Ireland, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, he disliked mixed marriages, and viewed flirtations between young persons of different religious creeds with extreme disfavour. The walks which Benedict took with Lizzie Finlay did not escape his notice, and on two occasions he dropped hints to Mrs. Finlay to the effect that she ought to look after her daughter more closely. But Mrs. Finlay was not willing to be advised in the

matter. In the first place, Lizzie was not very amenable to discipline. The girl had a habit of assuming very grand airs indeed when her mother admonished her, and going her own way afterwards. Besides, Mrs. Finlay had, between one thing and another, a good deal to do, and being naturally of an indolent disposition, did not want to add a conflict with her daughter to the other troubles of life. Moreover, she liked Benedict. He was a 'very proper young man'—a favourite phrase of hers—by which she meant that the lodger to whom she applied it neither drank to excess nor rioted in such a way as to endanger her furniture. He had also other virtues. He was 'like a child in the house.' This was high praise, for it meant, curiously enough, when one thinks what a child really is, that he gave little or no trouble, and made no extravagant demands for extra cooking, clean towels, or highly polished boots. Moreover, Benedict and Mr. Doyme, her most valued and faithful lodger, were very great friends, and she could not blind herself to the possibility that if the one were so vexed as to go away it was very likely that the other would go with him.

For these reasons Mrs. Finlay chose to be stupid when Father Heatly dropped hints to her about putting a stop to Lizzie's very undesirable flirtation. And the priest did not care to go further than the dropping of hints. He was a wise man, and knew that nothing tends so much to blunt the edge of a weapon like authority as its too frequent use. He preferred to keep the full weight of direct command in reserve for occasions of great magnitude.

Dr. Elias Smithson's lectures had attracted many Roman Catholics to the Protestant hall. There was, so far as Father Heatly could ascertain, nothing in what the lecturer said which could reasonably be objected to. Even the last lecture had contained nothing but moral teaching about temperance and such subjects, teaching with which Father Heatly was

in full agreement. He had certainly no objection to any of his flock studying the geography, natural history, or social conditions of the Fiji Islands. But he liked all such information to be imparted in a Catholic atmosphere, and he was probably quite right in supposing that the air breathed by Dr. Smithson lacked the desirable flavour. He was, therefore, vexed to hear that his parishioners had been inhaling it. He was particularly vexed—indeed, he was actually angry—to learn that Lizzie Finlay had been brought to the lectures by Benedict Kavanagh. It seemed to him that a deliberate effort had been made to subvert the young girl's faith.

Father Heatly must not be blamed for taking the view he did. In Ireland all clergy, whatever church they belong to, look at this matter of atmosphere in much the same way. A Protestant will have just the same objection to young men and young women under his care going to dances with Roman Catholics, or attending cooking-classes held in convents. The fact is, that hardly anyone in Ireland has a sufficiently robust belief in the superiority of his own creed to run the risk of allowing it to come into close contact with its rivals. This is unfortunate from an ecclesiastical point of view, because a faith so carefully tended is apt to sicken and die rapidly if the individual who professes it is by chance transplanted to a soil less securely sheltered. A compensating gain, however, may be found if the matter is looked at from the point of view of the country itself. It is a great advantage to a nation that the individuals of any species should not only be true to type, but should embody the distinctive features of their own particular breed as completely as possible. Therefore agricultural societies and the committees of cattle-shows offer prizes to cattle-breeders for the purest Short Horns and for the most unadulterated Kerry cows. They do not encourage the production of mongrel beasts neither Short Horns nor Kerries.

So also the Congested Districts Board, when it distributes flocks of Plymouth Rock fowl or White Leghorns to its clients, insists on elaborate precautions being taken to prevent any intermingling of these with birds of meaner pedigree. A White Leghorn is useful to the state; a cross between a White Leghorn and a barn door fowl is a harmful creature blocking the way to progress. In exactly the same way it is clearly for the public good that Protestants should be as Protestant and Roman Catholics as Roman Catholic as possible. The members of the different churches should be strictly penned apart, and not allowed to hold intercourse with each other. In Ireland this purity of breed has been very nearly perfectly attained, thanks to the exertions of the different ecclesiastics. Therefore Ireland is more progressive, enlightened, and intellectual, than any other country in the world.

Unfortunately these considerations were no consolation to Benedict Kavanagh when Mrs. Finlay informed him that she could no longer entertain him as a lodger. At first he did not understand why he was turned adrift, nor did his conversation with Mrs. Finlay enlighten him. She alleged various reasons for her action—the necessity for papering and painting her rooms, the impossibility of securing the services of a housemaid, a breakdown in her own health occasioned by overwork. Benedict did not believe her. In the end she wept softly, and then of course questioning had to cease. It was Mr. Evans who explained the matter to him. Mr. Evans had lived five years in Dunbeg, and though he neither appreciated Swinburne nor attempted to learn the Irish language, was a youth of observation and shrewdness.

‘It’s because you’re too thick with Miss Finlay,’ he said. ‘And because you took her to that lecture.’

‘But I didn’t take her to the lecture. She came

herself. She asked to be allowed to come with us, you know she did. And, besides, what harm did it do her?"

'Oh, I don't know that. You'd better ask Father Heatly.'

'Father Heatly! What in the world has Father Heatly——'

'For a man who reads books, books of poetry, and talks large with Doyme, I must say you're a bit of an ass in ordinary matters. Why, my dog Jep—come here, Jep! You'd have more sense than to go setting yourself up against the clergy in Dunbeg, wouldn't you?'

Then Benedict understood. Being young, rebellious by nature, and made self-assertive by his education, he became furiously angry. He made no attempt to understand Father Heatly's motives, or to reason out the philosophy of the great policy which was pressing against his individual will. He cursed a good deal, and expressed opinions about the Roman Catholic clergy in general which would have given unalloyed delight in the Orange lodges at Killard.

He had a week before him in which to discover new lodgings. Before half of it had elapsed another blow fell upon him which saved him the trouble of further search. This was a notification from Mr. Jeffars, the working partner in the firm of Jeffars and Digby, that he was to leave Dunbeg and take up work again in the Dublin office. He handed the letter to Mr. McCreery, who read it and handed it back, saying simply:

'I rather expected that.'

This is not quite such an irritating remark as 'I told you so,' but it very nearly is, and Mr. McCreery made it in a tone which suggested that having prophesied he now felt some satisfaction in having done so correctly. Besides, Benedict's temper was already at ignition point on account of his eviction from Mrs. Finlay's lodgings.

‘Why?’ he asked fiercely.

Mr. McCreery’s manner softened. He was a really kindhearted man, and he saw that Benedict was going to take the business badly.

‘I wouldn’t be too much vexed about it if I were you. After all, Dublin is a great deal pleasanter a place to live in than Dunbeg, and it won’t really count against you afterwards very much. Mr. Jeffars is a sensible man. He knows that young fellows like you do foolish things now and then, and are none the worse for them in the end.’

‘What have I done?’ Benedict was not in the least pacified by the kindly tone.

‘Well now, I warned you when you came here first not to be getting too thick with the Catholics. I told you it wouldn’t do. Now, didn’t I? And I tried again and again to drop you a hint. But you didn’t take it well.’

‘But what does it matter to anyone except myself if I go for walks with Miss Finlay?’

‘Who’s Miss Finlay? Oh, I know. She’s the fuzzy-headed little girl in your lodgings. I’m not talking about her at all.’

‘Then what the devil are you talking about?’

‘Don’t swear, Kavanagh. It’s no good swearing, and it’s a detestable habit, besides being wrong. You must know I didn’t mean Miss Finlay. Why, Mr. Adamson told me he’d given you a word of warning himself.’

Benedict’s mind flew back to an almost forgotten conversation.

‘It’s Doyne you’re talking about.’

‘Of course it’s Doyne. He’s a Catholic, and the very worst kind of Catholic, for he’s a Gaelic Leaguer. And everybody knows what that is. Why, Father Heatly himself does not approve of it. And if he doesn’t——’

Mr. McCreery shrugged his shoulders. A kind of Catholicism so vehemently ultramontane as to have excited the suspicions of Father Heatly was some-

thing beyond the reach of any words at Mr. McCreery's command. Benedict gasped helplessly in the face of a confusion of thought through which no man could hope to fight his way.

'Now don't think I want to lecture you, Kavanagh, or to make the most of your mistakes. But you have had every chance. Mr. Adamson asked you to his house, and you might have gone there often if you'd liked. And I told you myself that you might drop in on me any evening you felt dull. Mrs. McCreery would have been glad to see you, and I'd have let you hear my gramophone. But you never came.'

Benedict was most ungrateful. He cursed the gramophone. Mr. McCreery pretended not to hear, and went on:

'It's a great pity, a very great pity. I've always liked you, and you've done your work in the office well, exceedingly well. You've been most punctual and regular, and you've shown more ability than any clerk I've ever had under me. But it would not do, you know. It really would not do. You must see that yourself. How can a man be a clerk in an estate office, and at the same time go to Gaelic League meetings? You see yourself, you must see, that the thing's impossible.'

Benedict forced himself into a condition which he believed to be calm, and said:

'Will you tell me why?'

Mr. McCreery explained matters at some length. According to his view there were two classes of people in Ireland. There were loyalists, dependent on and therefore devoted to the landlords. And there were nationalists, hostile to landlords and Protestants, all of them members of some league or other, and therefore all of them untrustworthy. On the one side all Protestants who were true to their religion ranged themselves, waved Union Jacks, and boasted about the Ten Commandments. With them were a few Roman Catholics, men of respectable

family, owners of property. These also waved Union Jacks, and refrained from scoffing openly at the Decalogue. On the other side were all the other Roman Catholics, men without education, intelligence, or moral principle of any kind, who allowed themselves to be seduced into every kind of wickedness by unscrupulous agitators. No man could be on both sides at the same time. Nor was such a thing possible as being on neither side.

At the end of the explanation Benedict so far understood Mr. McCreery's attitude that he refrained from trying to reason with him.

After his work in the office was over he went for a long walk by himself in order to think the whole matter out. In reality he did not think at all. He raged. Part of his fury directed itself against Father Heatly, part of it against Mr. McCreery, Mr Jeffars, and then, glancing off them, against Mr. Adamson. It gratified him to set the two clergymen side by side and shoot bitter thoughts at them. Then the men appeared to him not to be men but embodiments of creeds. And both creeds were detestable, for both had interfered with his freedom. Each in its own way had prevented him from doing the thing he wanted to do. Why shouldn't he sit beside Lizzie Finlay, and look at pictures of sailors on rafts? The thing was surely innocent enough. Why should he not talk Irish to Mr. Doyne if he chose? He wished he could talk Irish. If he could he would speak nothing else to Mr. McCreery till he left Dunbeg. He desired a scheme of vengeance, dramatic, brutal if possible, at all events complete. It should embrace both parties, both creeds, and several representatives of each. There occurred to him lines out of one of Swinburne's poems. In the intervals of his half-hearted flirtation with Lizzie Finlay, and in spite of the allurements of Mr. Doyne's heroic Gaels, he had gone on reading Swinburne. Now he remembered a poem about a crucifix which exactly fitted his mood. It was magnificently rebellious, and full of scorn and

contempt. He applied it to religion as it manifested its spirit in Ireland.

‘Making with its moving shade
The souls of harmless men afraid.’

He went back to his lodgings hissing the words between his clenched teeth, and finding great satisfaction in the sound of them. He was Prometheus bound, but unconquered. He was Milton’s Satan cast by the Omnipotent into hell, but still defiant. He was also Benedict Kavanagh turned out of a lodging-house, and removed to a Dublin office from Dunbeg.

Mr. Evans, playing a mournful tune upon his melodeon, was in the sitting-room when Benedict entered. He had already—news travels with mysterious rapidity in small towns—heard of Benedict’s removal.

‘I congratulate you,’ he said. ‘Dublin’s a jolly sight better than Dunbeg. Theatres, my boy, music-halls, high old times of every sort, description, and kind. I wish I could get sent away to Dublin. But there’s no such luck for poor me. And I hear it was the Gaelic League did the trick for you. Your boss couldn’t stand the smell of it off your clothes. I’d join the thing to-morrow if I thought it would get me out of this beastly hole. I tell you, Kavanagh, I’m just about jolly well fed up with Dunbeg. Molly’s gone. I suppose you heard that. And there’s not another girl I’d look at twice in the whole town. You look as black as the devil himself. What’s the matter with you? Aren’t you pleased? Good Lord, to think that there can be a man in the whole world who wouldn’t be glad to get out of Dunbeg at any price.’

CHAPTER XIII

DUBLIN was once a brilliant capital, and, though robbed of much of its ancient splendour, it has never sunk to the level of a mere provincial town. It is the seat, not perhaps of a government, but certainly of an administration. Numerous officials, men of fine intelligence, wrangle cheerlessly with popularly elected bodies over the application of impossible laws to grotesque conditions. Situations which put to open shame the imaginings of comic-opera librettists give a distinction, if not a dignity, to the city. There is an imitation court which provides state ceremonials, receptions of *débutantes*, private *entrées*, occasions for wearing knee-breeches, silk stockings and swords in a style enviable by many a minor monarch. There are law courts in which every kind of justice can be obtained quite as expensively as in London; a national museum which is cleaner than the British one; a national library, and even a national picture gallery with several pictures in it. The city possesses, besides, the power of attracting to it the energetic and ambitious youth of the provinces. It is true that few come to Dublin in the spirit of Whittington, looking to gather fortunes off highways paved with gold. For the most part the young men mean to stay but a short time in the metropolis, desiring no more than to be hall-marked by one of the great educational bodies. Boys who have struggled through a series of intermediate examinations come at last to Dublin; some to frequent academies hopeful of Civil Service posts or clerkships in the Bank of Ireland; some to pervade the quadrangles and playing-fields of Trinity College; some, grumbling at the disabilities laid upon their creed, to attend classes in University College, and demonstrate effusively at Royal University

commencements; some to wander through the Four Courts in pursuit of such knowledge of law as will entitle them to practise as solicitors; some to pry with quickly satiated curiosity into the human body, dead in dissecting-rooms, moribund in operating theatres, spending money, time, and mental energy in order to be bullied for the rest of their lives by Boards of Guardians.

A large public exists for the sake, exists, indeed, largely by means of these boys. It is second in importance only to the official class, the bright flutterers round the Viceregal Court when care for a season ceases to harass them. As among officials so there are many grades among these shepherds of the intellect of Ireland. The Provost of Trinity College and the Head of the college in St. Stephen's Green are great men in their way, hardly if at all inferior to the chairmen of the principal Government boards or the chief commander of the police. Professors, spectacled and severe, or athletic, or dapper and endowed with drawing-room winsomeness, uphold, each after his own manner, the dignity of various kinds of knowledge, while they chisel with skill and energy the more obtrusive corners off the callow ignorance of students. An immense irregular force of crammers and grinders hovers on the heels of the professors, hand-feeding pupils with peptonised pellets of fact, or—is the other metaphor to be preferred?—rubbing with patient sandpaper the raw edges which the chisels leave. Behind these again come the landladies of lodging-houses, *vivandières* in the army of Ireland's intellectual advance, the guardians and nurses of the bodies of the boys whose minds are given over to provosts, professors, tutors, lecturers, and crammers.

These deserve a recognition they have never yet received. They are important people, though the academic world has not yet seen fit to deck them with coloured hoods. Perhaps now that women of all sorts and sizes are invited from the ends of the earth

to pay for Dublin degrees these deserving ladies will be dubbed doctors of economy by an appreciative University.

Without their aid it is impossible to imagine how the work of turning learned men loose through Ireland could proceed at all. It is they who provide bed, board, and fuel for the boys from the country—the raw material of the great educational factories of Dublin. The beds are often hard, lumpy in wrong places, and not very clean; but they are dry. The food is monotonous. Boiled rabbits and fried chops alternate at dinner-time. Breakfast is not always enriched with a rasher or an egg. Fires are meagre, and a bell must be racked excruciatingly before more coal can be obtained. But breakfast and dinner are always there, often punctually, sometimes hot. The fires maintain their vitality till midnight, and boots are somehow got clean in time for a start to the morning lecture. The woman who accomplishes these things for a houseful of young men at twenty-five shillings a week or thereabouts for each deserves official praise and private gratitude. The latter is sometimes forthcoming. Mrs. Brett, for instance, has earned the thanks of whole generations of students. For nearly a quarter of a century solicitors' apprentices have invited her to supper, providing, perhaps, such luxuries as oysters and porter on the evenings of the memorable days on which they have passed their final examinations. Demurer divinity students have presented her with gloves, mantles, and sometimes Bibles when they left her to be ordained. Rollicking young doctors have invited her to theatres and music-halls. Her rooms are never empty. A new generation steps at once into the places vacated by its predecessor. Curious traces of the older inhabitants survive in the rooms. The bones of a human hand are to be found in the parlour cupboard. They are inoffensive now, but on the day when their original owner boiled the member he had surreptitiously acquired in a dissecting-room the whole house

smelt abominably, and Mrs. Brett protested. A copy of Snell's great book on Equity survives a student who gave up as hopeless the attempt to pass his final examination in law. A drawing-board, with a now faded plan and elevation pinned to it, is jetsam of the stormy career of an architect's apprentice. A large note-book filled with statistics, geographical information, and valuable facts about the railway systems of Great Britain and Ireland once belonged to the round-faced son of a Donegal clergyman, who fought his way successfully to a clerkship in Guinness's Brewery.

Early in 1906 Mrs. Brett had three lodgers. Two—Mr. McCracken and Mr. Daly—were solicitors' apprentices. The third—Mr. Dunne—was a medical student. They were exceedingly friendly with each other and with Mrs. Brett. They dined together in a room which Mr. Dunne had all to himself pending the arrival of a fourth lodger, who was to complete the circle. After dinner they adjourned to the other sitting-room, that shared by Mr. McCracken and Mr. Daly. Here they smoked, deciding by an ingenious method of appeal to fortune, known as 'tossing odd man out,' who was to have the one comfortable chair. Perhaps if funds were plentiful they went to a theatre or music-hall. Often they spent an evening in a Turkish bath, a pleasant and soothing recreation which can be enjoyed after eight o'clock for one shilling. Sometimes they played nap with each other. Occasionally they were invited by Mrs. Brett to play 'Spoil Five' in her sitting-room. This was when Mrs. Brett had a guest whom she thought the young men would entertain. In every case the stakes played for were ridiculously small, and it was well understood that card debts were not to be settled promptly. By waiting for a week or two the sum lost could generally be won back again, and the necessity for parting with actual pennies avoided.

It was into Mrs. Brett's lodging-house that Benedict Kavanagh drifted four years after he left

Dunbeg. He had in the interval learned much of the world and its ways. He could play several games of cards skilfully, knew the names of many racehorses and the odds at which some of them had started on great occasions. He had once won a sweepstake on the Grand National, and afterwards lost more than he won by a series of speculative bets. He had heard a large number of comic operas and seen most of the music-hall stars who had visited Dublin. He could make startlingly intimate remarks about the private lives and the morality of actresses and dancing ladies with the manner of an elderly and disillusioned *roué*. He had acquired the art of nodding familiarly to barmaids on the occasions on which he entered their sanctuaries for refreshment. He was in the habit of alluding frequently to a mysterious friendship with one Tottie Green, who presided nightly over a diminutive bar attached to one of the music-halls. As a matter of fact he was still an innocent boy, almost as innocent as in the days when he wandered through the park at Dunbeg with Lizzie Finlay. It pleased him to pose as an exceedingly vicious young man, much as it pleases other people to show themselves off as very good, remarkably clever, or intimate with titled aristocrats. In reality, to be vicious requires a certain command of money, and with one hundred pounds a year—the income which promotion had secured for Benedict—a young man is almost forced to walk in narrower ways.

Also, Benedict was restrained from being what he professed to be by a certain fastidiousness of nature and an incurable shyness about taking first steps. He left Dunbeg in open rebellion against the authority and restraint, especially, as he believed, against the authority of religion. He purchased a new volume of Swinburne and sang to himself about the ‘roses and raptures of vice,’ as a thoroughly abandoned man should; but drawing near the thing he found raddled rags in place of sweet petals, and they filled him with disgust, not rapture. He read other books, too, not poetry, or not

so often, but cheap attacks on Christianity—books with scoffs in them which delighted him, and reasonings sufficiently specious to make acquiescence in the conclusions possible. Yet when the moment came for putting his boasted moral freedom into practice there was always something, a sickening infirmity of purpose, an irrational shrinking, which held him back.

He chanced upon a book on the morals of the coming age—a forgotten treatise which he picked up for twopence from a barrow full of worn-out literature. It was rebellious enough even for his need. The writer held nothing sacred. The fundamentals of all morality were declared to be no more than chains forged by the strong to keep the weak in perpetual servitude. Whole pages of garish rhetoric filled Benedict with joy. He read and re-read the book until he gradually became conscious of a great feeling for mankind behind the writer's hatred of restraint. This disquieted him. He doubted whether the reformer himself had practised all the liberty he preached; whether his ideal was indeed pure destruction, and not the creation of a new kind of noble living. Benedict did not want to think of noble living. Yet, while he read the book and desired to drink the cup of evil pleasure, he was haunted by the thought of a man—the author—beating against the bars of a cage, not that he might gorge carrion off a dung-hill, but in order to walk free into the sunshine and draw deep breaths of ocean-scented air.

There was no one to whom Benedict could speak of his thoughts or of the things he read. The companions—he made no friends—of his excursions to music-halls and drinking-bars were not the kind of men to understand the emotions which troubled him. And he preferred to be as they were, or not to differ from them in manners and talk. He liked them to think of him as a gay hedonist, and dreaded most of all the reputation of a prig.

On the evening of his arrival at Mrs. Brett's there was a leg of mutton for dinner. Mr Daly carved

it. He helped Benedict first, as the stranger, but explained that this act of courtesy was not to be regarded as a precedent.

'We take it turn about to carve,' he said, 'and the man who carves one week is helped first the week after, and second after that, and so on, as the other fellows come chipping in, until it gets round to his turn to carve again.'

Benedict expressed himself pleased at the arrangement, and Mr. Daly smiled, adding:

'We toss up at the beginning of the term for first turn. Afterwards the plan works out by itself. It's what you might call an automatic dodge. I thought of it one night while playing nap. It's on the same principle as the man next the dealer having the first shout, only the other way round. See? I've sometimes thought of taking out a patent for it.'

'What's on to-night?' asked McCracken. 'What about a T. B. ?—that's a 'Turkish bath,' he explained to Benedict. 'I feel muddy all over.'

'Don't listen to him, Kavanagh,' said Dunne. 'He knows very well he's not going to any Turkish bath to-night. He's got quite another engagement. Now, Cracky, don't be a beastly hypocrite. Own up that you've no more notion of going to be washed than Mary has. You wouldn't go off and spend the evening in a bath, would you, Mary?' This was addressed to the somewhat slovenly maidservant who handed the potatoes.

'You know jolly well, Cracky, that you're going down to play "Spoil Five" with old Mother Brett to-night. We're all going, Kavanagh, but specially Cracky. There'd be no use our going without him. He's the one who's really wanted. His best girl is to be there.'

'You dry up and be hanged!' said McCracken, well pleased.

'Is she good looking?' asked Benedict.

'She's a hospital nurse, if you want to know,' said McCracken. 'She was here one time nursing an old

Johnnie who had the drawing-room floor. He died in the end, but she was here for weeks and weeks. She made the greatest friends with Mother Brett, and ever since then she comes in an odd evening when she's off duty for a game of cards.'

'The arrangement is,' said Dunne, 'that whoever pays for her—hospital nurses are like nuns, you know; they have no money of their own—whoever pays for her sees her home. And it's always Cracky who happens to have the oof when she comes round. He sees her home, and, mind you, she's a fetching little thing, especially in that bonnet and cloak.'

McCracken blushed and looked exceedingly self-conscious. He was a freckled, red-haired youth, the son of a Presbyterian doctor in the North. It gratified him immensely to be supposed capable of a midnight flirtation with a hospital nurse. For the sake of his reputation he saw the lady home frequently—often paying as much as a shilling or one-and-sixpence for the privilege. She was a poor card-player, and almost always lost heavily. The glory that shone round him afterwards and the innuendo of Daly and Dunne were delightful; but the actual walks themselves were painful to him. He was conscious that he ought to be gallant and gay, but he could never think of any remark to make except a complaint that the Dublin streets were abominably badly lighted.

Mrs. Brett's room was in the basement story of her house. Its window gave upon the pavement of the area, the door of the coal-hole and the brick wall, surmounted with iron railings, beyond which foot passengers, an audible but unseen stream of them, passed along the street. The room, partly because of the brick wall and partly owing to the extreme dirt of the wall-paper, was dark during the day. At night Mrs. Brett lighted it, inefficiently, by means of a cheap paraffin lamp. It was furnished with a small oblong table covered with a green cloth, a selection of chairs of various patterns, all of them shakylegged, being in fact invalids retired compulsorily

from the service of the lodgers in the rooms above. A small bookshelf hung in the centre of one wall. It held the account-books of the butcher, baker, grocer, milkman, and others, as well as the pass-books in which the food consumed by each lodger was entered. Two large oleographs, rejected by a whole series of lodgers, hung one on each side of the bookshelf. On the chimneypiece was a tea-caddy, a box containing string, dusty gummed paper, and some stationery, and a statuette of a maiden in the act of diving, clad in a somewhat exiguous bathing costume. This had originally stood upon the parlour chimneypiece, and had been much appreciated until a divinity student, puritanical in his tastes, had demanded its removal.

It was not a luxurious room, and the chairs, being more or less decrepit, cannot have been comfortable for Mrs. Brett, who was more than fifty years of age and very stout. There were, however, compensating advantages. A small window beside the chimney gave a view of the kitchen. The muslin curtains which covered it were so cunningly arranged that Mrs. Brett could watch every motion of sluttish Mary, and her comrade Margaret, the cook, although they could not discover whether Mrs Brett was in her room or not. The upper part of the door was of muffed glass, but one small patch of it had been rubbed and scraped to a condition of transparency, and through it Mrs. Brett commanded a view of the passage and the door of the room where Mary and Margaret slept. Thus she had the reins of domestic government gathered in her hands as she sat in her room. The pass-books of traders and lodgers were within easy reach. The coal-hole could not be visited without her knowledge. The maids might not idle in the kitchen without detection, nor Mary spend overlong in the bedroom 'cleaning herself' after the first instalment of the day's work was completed. The possession of such a room goes far towards accounting for Mrs. Brett's singular success as a landlady.

When Benedict and the others entered, the room

and its owner wore something of a festive aspect. A tray covered with tea-cups stood on the green tablecloth. The lamp beamed benignantly on a shilling cake. A kettle hissed on the hob. Mrs. Brett was clad in an ancient, voluminous, but doubtless still valuable silk skirt and a kind of jacket of pale blue flannel. She called the attention of the young men to this garment, asking them to excuse her appearance in a peignoir, and alleging that she wore it on account of her sufferings from rheumatism.

The guest of the evening made her appearance, and was introduced to Benedict as Nurse Bodkin. He wondered at first that McCracken should be so fascinated as to pay extravagant card debts for her. Her appearance was in no way striking. Even when she laid aside her bonnet and cloak, choosing a chair so hopelessly shaky that no one was likely to want to sit on it to support them, there was nothing more attractive to be seen than a mass of fluffy yellow hair, a sallow complexion, and a meagre figure. Afterwards he appreciated her fascination better. She talked with extraordinary vigour and rapidity, was humorous in a delightfully easy and infectious manner, laughed at her own jokes, baring to admiration rows of singularly regular white teeth. She had a very agreeable way of emphasising her witticisms by slapping the hand or perhaps the cheek of the young man nearest to her and calling attention to her remarks by pinching someone's arm. Her fingers were long and shapely. It was a pleasure to be slapped or even pinched by them.

Mrs. Brett made tea, and the four young men vied with each other in waiting on Miss Bodkin.

McCracken brought her a saucer with two spoons in it, and was reminded archly that such an accident foreshadowed matrimony.

'It's time I was getting married, anyway,' she said. 'If I wait much longer I'll never get married at all.'

McCracken laboured to give birth to the kind of remark he felt he ought to make. Something he

wished to say, something airy and yet with a suggestion of tender passion beneath its airiness, some delicately turned compliment, courtly, a little exaggerated in its phraseology, yet essentially truthful, a thing to move laughing admiration from the others, a blush at its hidden earnestness from her. He was not assisted in his efforts by Dunne's nudge or Daly's advice:

'Go it, Cracky, now's your chance.'

It was he and not Miss Bodkin who blushed at last. She slapped his hand, rallying him.

'How stiff and grand you are to-night. You won't say anything nice to me even when I give you the chance; and poor little me wants something nice said so much after being scolded all day by the sister in charge of our ward.'

There was a note of pathos in her voice which roused the chivalry of all four young men. It would possibly have fared ill with the sister in charge if they had succeeded in laying hands on her just then.

After tea Mary was summoned by a tap on the window of observation. She removed the tray. Mrs. Brett locked up what was left of the cake, a small remnant, for Miss Bodkin had eaten several slices heartily; and brought out a pack of cards. The party ranged themselves round the table, and the lamp was put on the chimneypiece. In this position it shed an excellent light on Mrs. Brett's cards, and left those of Miss Bodkin and McCracken, who sat together at the opposite side of the table, in utter gloom.

'It doesn't matter,' she said, when appealed to. 'I never play a right card anyway, so I may as well play without seeing them. By the way, who's going to pay for me to-night?'

Mr. McCracken opened his mouth to claim the privilege.

'No, I won't have you,' said Miss Bodkin. 'I really can't have you seeing me home again after the last night. He was so naughty, Mrs. Brett. You can't imagine.'

Mrs. Brett chuckled fatly. She was a woman of immense experience of young men, and probably knew that Mr. McCracken's naughtiness was not of a sort to seriously embarrass Miss Bodkin. In fact, he had not been naughty at all, but, as he admitted to himself, excessively stupid. He felt the rebuke and determined at all costs to be bold and bad for the future. Meanwhile, Mr. Dunne and Mr. Daly looked at him enviously.

Miss Bodkin glanced at Benedict. Perhaps she hoped that he might turn out to be a more amusing companion; perhaps she merely wanted variety. But he feared to offer his services. A young lady who expected her escort to be naughty but scolded him for being too naughty, required a delicacy of finesse for which he felt himself unequal. In the end Mr. McCracken was allowed to make his offer, and had it graciously accepted.

The game played was 'Spoil Five,' once popular in Ireland, now almost forgotten save by the few who appreciate its peculiar charm. For 'Spoil Five' differs from every other card game in several important respects. The cards have eccentric values. A two will sometimes unexpectedly beat a ten of its own suit. And there are privileged individuals. A certain knave will lord it for a time over all the rest of the pack, a beggar on horseback, promoted by blind chance to a position of great honour, suddenly and arbitrarily deposed again. An ace of hearts carries immense weight. Like a high permanent official he holds a place independent of the party changes which give the government for a time into the hands of one suit or another. Trumps change, but the influence of the ace of hearts is paramount under all circumstances. Thus is the game full of irrational contradictions. No man not a player can possibly understand the laws of it, or how the tricks are won and lost. And no one sits down to play 'Spoil Five' in the expectation of winning. In other games some one must win, be it only by the narrow

margin of an odd trick. In 'Spoil Five' it is possible for all the players to lose continuously. One does not try to win. To do so is to court swift destruction and irrecoverable loss. The crafty player aims solely at preventing other people from winning. A series of rapid partnerships are formed against any individual who appears for a moment to be fortunate. No such friendships or alliances endure. Let one solitary ray of good luck illuminate a player's hand and at once his partners and allies become his deadliest foes. It is strange that this game has lost its hold upon the affections of the Irish people. Can any other game ever rival it in sportive reflection of the realities of life and politics in Ireland? Will any other game afford us such training in swift craftiness, high diplomacy, and cheerful acceptance of irrational events? We have turned to meaner games, comparatively rational games of chance. Is a change coming over our national character? Are we learning to look out at life through Anglo-Saxon spectacles, ceasing to find a joy in the amazing incongruities which result from the philosophy of common-sense preached to us so assiduously by our conquerors?

Mrs. Brett played the game with masterly cunning, disguising till the last possible instant the strength or weakness of her hands. She won four pools out of the six played for, carrying off sevenpence from Benedict, and more than double that sum from Mr. McCracken.

CHAPTER XIV

JUST at first Benedict's comrades in Mrs. Brett's lodging-house distrusted him a little, and were disinclined to make him entirely free of their company. They discovered that he read books, and this seemed

to them an assumption of a kind of superiority very difficult to tolerate. Indeed, it is impossible to understand why anyone should read a book without being obliged to do so by the fear of the questions of some inquisitive examiner. Now-a-days, when authorities, like the Irish Board of National Education, insist upon their victims reading such works as 'Robinson Crusoe' during school hours, the youth of the country becomes, naturally, very suspicious, and the reading even of story-books is sufficient to get a bad name for the person who is so ill-advised as to do it voluntarily. Unfortunately for Benedict, his reading had become an incurable habit. More than once he stayed at home of an evening by himself, when McCracken, Dunne, and Daly had plans on foot for natural enjoyment. It was well known that he had no examination to pass, and that his future did not in any way depend on his charging his memory with the foolish things which the prigs of other generations had written and got printed. The inference was obvious. Benedict must himself be something of a prig.

It took him some time to overcome the prejudice aroused against him. He did so at length; but only by showing that he was quite ready to take his part in the delights which appealed to his friends, and by never alluding in conversation to any subject of which the writers of books might be supposed to treat. Thus his habit of reading came to be looked upon as an eccentricity, quite unintelligible, but tolerable when it became clear that it did not result in a pose of superiority, or take the form of a tacit reproof of illiteracy.

Gradually he even acquired a sort of leadership. He was a few years older than the other three, though he looked boyish still. He said more daring things than they did. He railed at constituted authorities in a way which bewildered while it delighted them. So it came that plans were submitted to him, and pleasures voted insipid or exciting according to the views which he expressed.

It is something to achieve eminence of any kind, and better to crow loud as lord of the narrowest fowl-run than to be pecked into submissiveness by stronger birds and cackle but feebly in a broad place. Yet Benedict was not satisfied. Mr. McCracken's tone of deference and the naïve admiration of Mr. Dunne and Mr. Daly moved him chiefly to self-contempt. Their amusements palled on him more and more. A feeling of staleness came with frequent roustering through the streets after the performances of music-halls were over. It was pleasant enough at first to plunge down steep steps into the subterranean recesses of a shell-fish seller's shop. But a dish of cockles was generally the most that his party could afford, and the flavour of cockles wearies the palate in the end. Also cockles produce unpleasant irruptions on the faces of those who eat them in large quantities. It was a fine thing to provoke admiration by flinging jests across her bar to Tottie Green:

'Well, Miss Green, blooming as usual. How do you manage to keep that colour on your cheeks? Is it fresh air and exercise? Or is it something else?'

Or, 'Is it true, Miss Green, that you're going to be presented to the Lord-Lieutenant next week? I saw it in the paper. Where are you going to get your court train?'

Such sayings sounded finely uttered beneath the blaze of incandescent gas, but there was a flatness about their constant repetition. Miss Tottie Green responded no more warmly than the interests of her trade required, and was always quite ready to receive similar badinage from the next comer with the same air of somewhat weary gratitude. She served the desired small whisky-and-soda deftly, and smiled vacuously while it was being consumed. Then—the glass was empty, spare shillings exhausted, the last cigarette in the case lit, and there was nothing left except to go home to bed.

There came on Benedict a hunger to be something more than he was, to do something more than he was

doing. Rebellion and the casting off of restraint were fine things, no doubt, but he felt that they ought to lead on to something. So far they had not led to anything very great or even very bad. He longed vaguely for something, without understanding what he wanted. The feeling became insistent, and pressed upon him constantly.

McCracken, Dunne, and Daly seemed satisfied. They did not want to be any better than they were. Nor did Benedict want to be better. He remembered with a curious sense of pain his boyhood and the holidays spent at Killard. He believed in Canon Hamilton's sincerity, believed that he was, according to his lights, a good man. But he did not want to go back to his boyhood, or come again under the influences he had cast off. After all, Canon Hamilton was nothing but an old fool. The creed he taught stood ridiculous in the light of modern science. Benedict had read what he believed to be books of modern science, and he knew how to estimate the Christian creed, Canon Hamilton's form of it, or any other. The old morality was a mere web of prejudices inherited from ignorant generations. Benedict was quite convinced of this, though he had not broken far through the meshes of it yet. The fierce virility of the northern Orangemen appealed to him, but only because of its self-assertion. Religion—and they professed to be religious, as he knew—was nothing but a napkin tied across their eyes. He knew well, for he had read in a book what religion was. It was *religio*, a binding. That was the etymology of the word, and its meaning agreed with it. He had come in contact with the thing itself when Father Heatly harassed him about Lizzie Finlay, and Mr. Adamson warned him against a friendship with Mr. Doyne. Therefore he needed neither etymology nor the conclusions of physical science to teach him how wise the man is who refuses to submit to the bondage of creed or system of morality.

Sometimes he remembered Mr. Doyne and his study

of the Irish language. He could picture very distinctly in his mind the troubled schoolmaster, the plodding carter, and the others in the little bare room. The look of their green dog-eared books and painfully scrawled exercises came back to him. He knew that some kind of enthusiasm had inspired their toil. He even recollected how he himself had felt the breath of it. But the emotion was entirely lost. The whole business seemed to him now to be merely foolish.

McCracken, Dunne, and Daly seemed satisfied. They did not even want to be any worse than they were. In due time, no doubt, they would pass their examinations, go back to the places from whence they came, and settle down for life. They would make a little money by much toil; then they would marry and care greatly for very little things. They would cultivate vegetables in gardens, breed special kinds of dogs, read local papers with keen interest, and become excited over the doings and sayings of wholly unimportant people. They would all subscribe to the funds of churches. They would meet each other, perhaps, in those days, or meet him. A wife, a good, obedient woman, worn a little with the care of children, would be sent to bed. The fire would be poked to a blaze; pipes would be lit; then a grey-haired McCracken, elder of his church, or Dunne, a County Councillor, or Daly, rotund and fatherly, would talk with him about old times. He had read his Shakespeare, and he knew beforehand what the conversation would be:

‘We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow.’

‘That we have, that we have, that we have; in faith we have. Our watchward was “Hem, boys!”’

The prospect by no means contented Benedict. He had a hunger in him to be something more than he was, to do something more than he was doing. Goodness failed to attract him. It was at most a draught of sugared water. It involved always the hated submission to authority, the sacrifice of his own

will, and the right to go his own way. It remained open to him to be bad. But his must be a genuine badness; no Master Shallow's timid touching on the edge of vice.

In the month of June, shortly before the end of the term and the day which would call his three friends away from Dublin to their various homes, a very exciting thing happened. Benedict won a bet. He had wagered two shillings on a horse against which long odds were laid. He had taken the advice of a knowing friend, a 'sure tip' so the advice was described, and put his money on an animal whose name he had never heard before. Long experience of tips given with equal confidence had taught him to expect no great result. But this time the unexpected happened. He found himself the possessor of no less a sum than five pounds. He returned to Mrs. Brett's with the sovereigns in his pocket and announced his stupendous fortune. Congratulations poured upon him. Even Mary, often the butt of pleasant raillery, seemed elated. He presented her at once with two shillings, the sum originally wagered, long counted as lost, now not to be missed out of the golden abundance of five pounds.

What to do with the money? It was obvious to Benedict that a sum so acquired, so plainly outside the balance-sheet of ordinary income and expenditure ought to be lavished in one magnificent festivity.

The possession of so much money with no responsibility attached to it, no fees to be paid, no weeks to be lived by means of it, was amazing and bewildering to the young men. Benedict's determination to spend the whole of it at once, to fling it broadcast in one gorgeous act of luxury, appealed to them strongly. His audacity was splendid. It was Mr. Dunne who expressed their feelings for them in well-chosen words:

'Great Scot!' he said. 'One almighty, blood-red burst!'

McCracken, the Northern, cautious, unimaginative,

ventured a counsel of prudence. Benedict would not listen to him for a moment.

'Keep it by me! Put it in the post-office savings-bank, I suppose, like the tip the little girl gets from her uncle. Not I. I have my chance now, the first chance I ever had of doing precisely what I want to do, and, by the living Jove, I mean to make the most of it!'

Long consultation followed. Dunne had heard from a friend that two music-hall stars of singular brilliance were about to visit Dublin.

'The Villoni sisters,' he said. 'They've never been in Ireland before. I'm told they're ripping. They have a song about being sea-sick and a turn called "The Drunken Johnny's Dance." They say it's tip-top. What?'

It was decided to take a box for the occasion of their visit. There was something splendid and reckless in taking a box. There would be dinner beforehand, a good dinner.

'I know a place,' it was McCracken still instinctively bent upon some economy who made the suggestion, 'where they give you seven courses for half-a-crown.'

Seven courses! That was the kind of dinner that Benedict wanted.

'There's a band there which plays while you eat,' added McCracken.

'Yes,' said Benedict, 'that would come to ten bob for the four of us. Say another ten bob for drinks and smokes.' He was determined that they should enter the music-hall smoking cigars, good cigars.

There would be incidental expenses, a car perhaps to drive from the restaurant, more drinks during dull parts of the performance, and throughout the evening more cigars, a constant succession of cigars. Then there was a bar known by reputation to Daly which might be approached afterwards. He had not the pleasure of the barmaid's acquaintance, but he had heard of her. She was said to be the best fun of any

in Dublin. On what occasion could such a siren be visited more fittingly? They might even leave the music-hall before the end of the performance so as to have more time with her. There is something regal about leaving an entertainment before it is finished after paying to see the whole of it. The idea attracted Benedict.

'Let's leave,' he said, 'as soon as the Villoni sisters have done their turn. There'll be nothing else worth looking at. The ballet's all rot.'

'Right oh!' said Dunne cheerfully, and his acquiescence was echoed by McCracken and Daly.

'What about a cockle dive to finish up with?' asked Daly.

But Benedict did not accept the suggestion eagerly.

'Not cockles, of course,' said Daly apologetically, 'not cockles. But what's the matter with prawns or crab or—' his voice sank to a whisper at the suggestion—'or oysters?'

Benedict had never eaten oysters. They were a very expensive kind of food, and no doubt proportionately delicious. He pondered.

'Look here,' he said, 'we'll order in two dozen, or four or five dozen, or whatever the proper number is, and we'll invite Mother Brett to supper. She'd eat oysters, I suppose.'

'Would a cat drink cream?' asked Dunne, with fine irony.

'You can't eat oysters in June,' said McCracken. 'I don't know why exactly, but there's something about there not being an "r" in the name.'

This was discouraging, but Benedict was not to be defeated.

'Well, then, lobsters if we can't have oysters. And, I'll tell you what, we'll have a bottle of fizz, too. Two bottles, if the money will run to it. How much does fizz cost?'

McCracken remembered seeing certain brands priced at ten shillings a bottle in a hotel wine-list. He was gloomy. Would the money, would even five

pounds, run to it? Say so much for the box, so much for dinner, so much for smokes and drinks, sundries, and tips. There would be tips, of course. Who could tell what tips might be expected from the cigar-smoking occupants of a box? McCracken added up the figures with knitted brow.

‘Better stick to stout,’ he said. ‘After all, there’s nothing better than stout, and even half a dozen bottles—and I’m sure Mother Brett will be good for two—would leave you a few shillings over.’

‘But I don’t want to have anything over,’ said Benedict.

‘Can’t you see, Cracky,’ said Dunne, ‘he wants to blow the whole thing in one night like a gentleman?’

‘Perhaps,’ said Daly, ‘there may be some cheaper kind of champagne. Hang it all, lots of fellows drink the stuff. I don’t suppose they can all of them be millionaires.’

It was determined to make inquiries on the subject. Mrs. Brett, an authority on prices, was consulted, and took the matter in hand. She promised to obtain the wine at a greatly reduced figure from a man who happened to be a friend of hers.

A week passed, and the preliminary advertisements of the Villoni sisters appeared on the hoardings. Benedict made haste to book his box, and was actually the first to make sure of seeing the famous ladies. Thus he got his choice of all the boxes and of all the evenings in the week. Then more advertisements appeared. At first there had been nothing on the hoardings except the bare name ‘Villoni.’ Next a modest explanation was offered, ‘The World-famed Sisters.’ Afterwards, lest even world-fame might have missed sounding in Dublin, ‘Mimetic, Musical Comédiennes.’ So far the hoardings. The newspapers added stimulating information in their advertisement columns. It was on record that the rush for seats was unprecedented, and readers were advised to repair to the booking-office at once. All that concerned the sisters was eagerly scanned by the four young

men at Mrs. Brett's. Benedict had engaged his box for Tuesday night. This, it was felt, was a subtle and knowing thing to do. On Monday there might be hitches in the performance, such as naturally occurred on first nights. Later on in the week the first enthusiastic spirit of the entertainment might have worn off. Tuesday seemed to be the perfect middle day.

On Tuesday morning, Mary, still joyfully reminiscent of her two shillings, was sent out for copies of the whole four morning papers. They were absolutely unanimous in the praise of the sisters Villoni. It is an evidence of the all-conquering majesty of true art that in the presence of the great comédiennes the lions and lambs of Irish political strife lay down together. The realistic description of sea-sickness, which was one of the features of the entertainment, might very well have aroused the suspicions of earnest Unionists. It undoubtedly tended to bring prominently before the public mind the existence of St. George's Channel, and the unpleasantness of a voyage across it, thus emphasising the unfortunate geographical fact, much better kept hidden from public view, that Ireland and England are two separate islands. Yet no protest whatever was made against the song either by *The Irish Times* or *The Daily Express*. Nor did the Nationalist papers find in the 'Drunken Johnny's Dance' an insult flung by a wanton foreigner in the face of the long-suffering Irish people, although our want of sobriety is supposed to be the constant theme of Anglo-Saxon dramatists. The philosophic stranger reading the four newspapers would have learned that, however bitterly the Irish may quarrel about such matters as religion, politics, and the possession of land, they unite in the praise of great art, and are unanimously appreciative of refined and elevated amusement.

To Benedict and his friends no such considerations occurred. Each possessed himself of one of the four papers, and, letting tea and bacon grow cold, read out

extracts from the panegyric paragraphs, exchanging papers and re-reading aloud what had been read before, until it became absolutely necessary for Benedict to start if he was to reach his office in time. McCracken, who stood sponsor for the two-and-sixpenny dinner with the seven courses, agreed to visit the place where it was sold, interview the head waiter, and secure a special table for the party. Dunne and Daly paid a visit to Mrs. Brett to make sure that there would be no mistake about the lobsters and champagne.

At half-past six the act of dining commenced. A *hors d'œuvre*, thus described on a somewhat unintelligible menu card, was handed round. Soup followed, and fish and other things, the whole seven courses taking nearly an hour to get through. Beer was the drink of the party at first, then whisky-and-soda; finally, when the cigars were lit, brandy, called by the waiter 'special liqueur brandy.' Benedict, firmly determined to escape for this night at least from the encompassing pettiness of life, drank more than the others, even taking two glasses of the special liqueur brandy. A car was ordered, and the party drove to the music-hall. They sat chatting to each other, blasé and indifferent as became wealthy young men of the world, while a professor in spangled garments made dogs jump through hoops and sit on chairs. They were more appreciative of a negro who announced himself as a lion killer, and then explained in an aside to the audience that he meant a dandelion killer. After delivering himself of this splendid jest, he danced, beating the ground noisily with enormously long shoes. Of a girl in diaphanous draperies who played a mandoline softly in a pale green light they were frankly contemptuous. When the rest of the audience applauded her, Benedict expressed his disgust by retiring to the bar for a drink. The other three sat through the encore, and afterwards enjoyed the gambols of a trick cyclist who rode rapidly round and round the stage, stripping off as he went, and

scattering with reckless profusion an incredible number of collars.

Benedict returned flushed and talkative in time for the great act of the evening. Certainly the Press had not praised the Villoni sisters too highly. The song of sea-sickness surpassed the expectations of all who heard it. The whole audience shouted the chorus after it had been repeated to them four or five times.

‘No doubt it is very poetic, poetic,
But unless your inside’s sympathetic—pathetic
It’s likely to prove an emetic, emetic,
The sea with its beautiful billows!’

The actual crisis, the final spasm of the attack, came with the word ‘billows.’ It prolonged itself, assisted with agonised, staccato hiccups from the cornet, and died away finally in disgusted exhaustion, accompanied by bass notes on the ‘cello.

For the dance which followed, one of the sisters assumed a gentleman’s dress suit, a shirt with a very shiny front, and an enormously high collar. She had the manner and the speech of an intoxicated man. It was with great difficulty that she overcame the reluctance of an extremely shy maiden, the other sister, now arrayed in a ball dress, to make a show of herself by waltzing round the stage. In the end she was foolish enough to consent, and tried to make the best of an unpleasant situation by singing a very sentimental song while her partner whirled her round. For some time all went well, though it was with evident difficulty that the male sister was kept upon her legs. In the middle of the second verse of the song the catastrophe which had been inevitable from the first, occurred. There was an entanglement, a crash, and both were stretched, not unbecomingly, on the ground. They responded to one frenzied encore, but declined to be drawn by the most seductive cat-calls of the audience after that. They were, after all, working women, and if more was wanted from them,

it could be got the next night by paying for admission again.

Faithful to his plan Benedict proposed to leave as soon as it was evident that the sisters would appear no more. Another car was hired, and the party drove to the place where Mr. Daly's barmaid presided over the sale of whisky. Benedict entered her sanctuary conscious of an unaccustomed elation of spirits. He felt bold enough to say or do almost anything. Wit of amazing brilliance sparkled and bubbled sensibly in his brain. He knew that he had but to open his mouth for it to take to itself felicitous expression. No form of magnificent display before men or audacious gallantry towards women seemed too great for him. He shouldered his way through a group gathered near the door, and approached the bar with splendid swagger. He gazed boldly at the siren behind it, and found that she came up to, indeed, far beyond, the expectations he had formed. A painfully crimped touzle of dark hair covered most of her forehead and the front part of her head. It seemed to Benedict that a shining splendour of dark tresses crowned her. She had large brown eyes, brown skin, touched at cheeks and lips with flaming carmine, bright white teeth, and a chin with one deep dimple in it. She moved quickly to and fro, glancing boldly at the men in front of her, setting glasses before them with coquettish tossings of her head, sweeping their coins into her till with magnificent gestures of contempt.

It seemed to Benedict that he had never seen anyone more ravishing. She was, in his eyes, the descendant, the actual daughter, the re-incarnation of one of the glorious women of antiquity, the fame of whose voluptuous beauty and reckless audacity comes blown to a feebler generation across the pages of history. Great names, to which, indeed, he could attach little that was definite, recurred to him, bringing misty thoughts of sensuous splendour. Cleopatra, Theodora, Lucrezia—he scarcely knew who they were, or

what they did, or when they lived, but there was with him a vague consciousness that they had risen to imperial heights of passionate delight. They, or all that they stood for in his mind, faced him, smiled on him, enraptured him, in the person of this vulgarly-bedizened creature behind her bar.

He ordered drinks, met her eyes boldly as she served them, drank to her, demanded more to drink, and then more again. He drank to her eyes, her mouth, her hair. Daly touched him on the arm, whispered advice to him, suggested going home. Benedict shook him off, and called for still more to drink. The girl looked at him.

‘I’ll give you no more,’ she said. ‘You’ve had enough. A boy like you ought to be at home in his bed.’

A loud laugh greeted her sally. Benedict, madened with shame, struck his fist on the bar in front of him, and demanded more to drink. The girl made a mocking mouth at him, and danced down the whole length of her counter to the corner furthest from him.

There stood meek in the very corner a pallid-faced boy in shabby clothes. He held a sixpence between his finger and thumb, waiting to be served with a drink which he dared not raise his voice to call for. His frayed coat cuffs, cracked rubber collar, and cowed, patient eyes seemed strangely out of place among the glittering lights, winking gilt mirrors, and bold, sensual faces in the room. He laid a small, neatly-tied, brown paper parcel on the counter in front of him. The girl saw him and laughed in his face.

‘Another boy!’ she said. ‘What brings all the little boys in Dublin here to-night? I don’t sell sugar-sticks and marbles. Go and take your pennies home with you.’

‘I want a glass of beer, please, miss.’

It is impossible to imagine why this anæmic creature should have wanted beer at half-past ten at night; or why, wanting it, he should have come with

his pitiful sixpence, his shabbiness, and his parcel, to just such a place to get it.

'I want a glass of beer, please, miss,' she mimicked him. Then a demon of mischief danced in her eyes. She leaned forward and snatched the parcel from him.

'Give it back!' he said—'give it back at once! You can't have it. You must give it back. Do you hear?'

His face grew suddenly crimson. She held the parcel tauntingly, just beyond the reach of his outstretched hand. Then, seeing his face, pointed a finger at him.

'Look at him blushing!'

'Give it back!' he said, feebly angry. Then beseechingly, 'Please, give it to me. It's not mine really. It's my sister's.'

The girl deliberately untied the string, opened the end of the parcel, and peeped in. Then, with a burst of laughter, she tore the paper off, shook out and held aloft a nightdress. A great shout of joy greeted her performance. Laughter followed, and stamping of feet shook the room until the glasses and bottles quivered on their shelves. The girl flaunted the garment above her head, minced down her bar again, waving it like a flag. A shrill voice rose above the tumult.

'I tell you it's my sister's. She asked me to call for it on my way home. Give it back—oh, give it back!'

Then, with a vain look for sympathy at the contorted faces round about him, the boy turned and fled.

Benedict, hands on hips and head thrown back, roared with laughter. Then, when the girl rolled the nightdress into a wisp, and flung it on the floor, he leaned across the bar towards her and hiccupped a remark. The girl turned towards him. He repeated what he had said more plainly. The words were impertinent, coarse, abominable. She turned again, took up the tin basin in which she washed her glasses,

and with one sweep of her arm flung the whole contents of it into Benedict's face. He choked, spluttered, vociferated. Then, before he could recover himself enough to resist them, his friends seized him and hurried him away.

They took him home, dragged him upstairs, and put him to bed. Then, miserably ashamed, they went to bed themselves, leaving Mrs. Brett to deal unaided with six lobsters and two bottles of a drink which her friend had described as champagne and sold at two-and-sixpence for the bottle.

CHAPTER XV

NEXT morning Benedict woke to a condition of sickness and extreme physical wretchedness. After a little while self-reproach and shame obliterated with acuter misery the sense of bodily suffering. The earlier incidents of the night's progress he recalled distinctly. His taste, his sense of self-respect, revolted bitterly from the thought of them. His conscience, long silenced, cried out against him. The recollection of the whisky he had not really wanted to swallow and of the cigars he had consumed without enjoyment filled him with disgust. The Villoni sisters grimaced and pranced before his imagination very horribly. The tune of their famous song, with all its gasps and gurgles, created in him a sense of actual nausea like that it described. He struggled in vain for any clear memory of what happened after he left the music-hall. Rising from his bed, he took up the clothes he had worn the night before. They were still wet, and the smell of them was evil. He became sure that he had undergone some vile degradation.

He stood still, holding sodden garments at arm's

length, while a blurred picture of the scene at the bar rose to his memory. He saw again the faces of the men who had crowded the room. They were caricatured, were more gross, more purple-blotched and swollen than the faces of men ever were. He saw the girl, no longer alluring, not even sensuous now, but grotesque like a pious artist's personification of one of the seven deadly sins, depicted for the sake of edification on the wall of a village church. The lights of the room, reflected from the bulging bellies of huge bottles, grinned at him, mocked him with monstrous grimaces. He smelt again, smelt actually from the clothes in his hands the vile odour of the dirty water. He felt the lukewarm splash upon his face. It was his baptism into the communion and fellowship of the vile, the church of hell.

He shrank from meeting his friends at breakfast. He believed that he knew how they would behave to him. There would be smiles and words of sympathy for his physical discomfort, suggestions of remedies such as he and they had read of, devilled bones, hock, hairs of dogs that had bitten him, the luxuries of battered rakes, unattainable in Mrs. Brett's establishment and undesirable to Benedict in his mood. He dressed slowly, pausing often to curse himself and rail aloud at his own bestial folly. His mirror showed him a face that was strange to him. His forehead was wrinkled excessively, his eyebrows drawn together in an upward reaching frown of misery, his lips were parted and pulled out into a stiff grin, leaving bare the edges of clenched teeth. Then suddenly a wave of fresh emotion swept over him. He turned and knelt beside his bed; not to pray, for he had long ago broken the habit of prayer and could have found no words even if the wish had been with him. He pushed his face down against the tossed blankets, spread his arms straight out beyond his head, and sobbed fiercely without tears.

Only Dunne was seated at breakfast when Benedict entered the room, and he, too, seemed ashamed

and subdued. He attempted one jovial remark, something about a 'batter' so unique as to merit the incongruous epithet 'chronic'; but he said the brave words dubiously, his eyes, after one furtive upward glance, fixed on the teapot. Benedict snubbed him fiercely, and silence followed. Soon McCracken came down. His eyebrows interrogated Dunne and received a frown for an answer. He seated himself, cut a slice of bread, and was silent. Benedict was the leader of the band, a little feared because he was not understood. If he chose to sulk McCracken would not risk an insult by attempting to pacify him. Doubtless in time the headache would disappear, and the shame—he understood that Benedict might be ashamed—would wear thin. Then things would be as they had been before, and the subject of the night's performances might be jested on or comfortably ignored. Daly was braver, or perhaps less susceptible to the atmosphere of the parlour, where his three friends sat like the poet Wordsworth's party, 'all silent and all damned.' He swung into the room with a jaunty swagger.

'Well, chappies,' he said, 'feeling off colour? A bit chippy? What? You look pretty well washed out, Kavanagh, and you ought to. Never saw man or mortal more blue to the world than you were when I put you to bed. Dunne there was what I'd call careless. Cracky was doing his little best to sing, and we all know that in his proper senses he'd no more try to turn a tune than fly. But as for you, Kavanagh—well, all I can say is, it's lucky you had me with you.'

Benedict scowled at him, and muttered something about a cursed idiot. Daly was quite unabashed. He whistled a cheerful stave, winked at McCracken, flicked Dunne's ear playfully, and sat down.

Then Mary entered with a letter. No jovial badinage saluted her. She looked from one to another doubtfully.

'If it's for Mr. Kavanagh,' said Daly, 'you'd

better hand it to him on the end of a fork. He's snappish and might take a bit off your hand if you venture too near him.'

The letter was for Benedict. He took it, opened it, read it slowly, and then left the table, flung himself on the sofa and covered his face with his hands. The other three gazed at each other in extreme discomfort. For a time no one spoke. Then Daly said something about bad news from home. None of them knew anything about Benedict's home, but they had homes of their own, fathers who might be stingy about money, mothers before whom certain doings in Dublin were not mentioned, sisters and young brothers whom they did not talk about, but all of them people very dear. They understood that news might come in letters which would set life to a very solemn tune, and make the sisters Villoni a hateful memory. It was Daly, courageous in this emergency as he had been in his jests, who went over to Benedict and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

'I'm sorry for you, old man, very sorry. Don't mind my silly gas. I wouldn't have said a word if I'd guessed you were in trouble.'

Benedict sobbed. Already in his bedroom he had sobbed, and sobbing is an expression of emotion to which it is easy to give way a second time.

'Buck up,' said Daly. 'Take it like a man, Kavanagh, buck up.'

The advice was certainly good. The form in which it was given must have been appropriate, for McCracken and Dunne repeated it.

'Buck up, old man,' they said, standing a little behind Daly, and gazing with awkward commiseration at Benedict's back and shoulders. 'Buck up! Buck up!'

Benedict sat up, white-faced, red-eyed, miserable.

'I've just heard——' He sobbed again. 'Here, take it and read it yourselves.'

Daly took the letter. It was from Canon Hamilton's housekeeper, an ill-expressed letter, announcing

baldly that the old man was very ill, probably dying, and had bidden her write to summon Benedict. None of the three young men had ever heard of Canon Hamilton, or knew in what relationship he stood to Benedict, but they saw that the case was one for sympathy and help.

'Be a man, Kavanagh, be a man,' said Daly, and the others exhorted him briefly in like manner. The night before they had also wished Benedict to be a man, thinking that manhood expressed itself in whisky drinking, swagger, and shouting in a music-hall. Now their conception of a man's part in life was different. It included a display of the kind of courage which takes hard blows from fortune without shrinking, which even opposes to adversity an aggressive front. Women offering each other comfort are more voluble, also their ideal of bravery is different. 'There, there, don't give way,' they say. They say also many other things, but all their exhortations are to a passive endurance. These young men asked more of their friend, though they asked it awkwardly. To be a man includes 'bucking up'; and 'bucking up' is something active, a resistance, not only an endurance. So for their own part, though their sympathy might be tied to two banal phrases, their minds worked swiftly towards schemes of practical aid.

'Of course, he must go at once,' said McCracken, 'by the next train.'

'Yes,' it was Daly who made the suggestion. 'Dunne, go down to Mother Brett and ask her for the loan of a time-table. If she hasn't got one, go out and buy an A.B.C. at the nearest shop, and don't be all day. Cracky, you get his things together and put them into a bag, into my gladstone; it's the decentest one we have among us. Here, wait a minute, Dunne. Don't start yet. I'm coming with you. I must go down to the office and tell them Kavanagh won't be there to-day, nor to-morrow; get leave of absence for him and that sort of thing.

You sit quiet, old man. We'll fix everything up for you. Come on, you fellows.'

Outside the door of the sitting-room Daly stopped the other two.

'What about money?' he asked. 'Has he got any?'

A consultation was held in whispers. It was evident that Benedict would be put to a considerable expense. It was the general opinion that he could have little or no ready money.

'Pretty well cleaned out after last night.'

'There are sure to be others going down, relations and people. He ought to go decently, second-class.'

'Or first. There was something in the letter about Beauford being sent for too. He's a swell, that fellow. Sure to travel first.'

'And if the old man dies he'll want to get a black coat and a silk hat.'

'And gloves. You must have gloves for a funeral.'

'It comes to this,' said Daly. 'We've got to stump up. It's very lucky, as it happens, that it is just the end of the term. I've got an extra quid over and above what I'll owe to Mrs. Brett for my travelling expenses.' He fumbled in his pocket and produced a sovereign. 'Some of my property will have to go up the spout for a bit. But it doesn't matter. We must see Kavanagh through.'

Dunne had a smaller sum in actual cash. He reckoned hurriedly the value of some articles of clothing, and agreed to contribute fifteen shillings. McCracken handed over a very dirty banknote for a pound.

'It's all right,' he said. 'Kavanagh will pay us back some day.'

'I don't care if he doesn't,' said Dunne.

'Don't talk about paying back,' said Daly. 'We have the money and he wants it. He ought to have it.'

McCracken excused himself. 'I'm not refusing to give it up, am I? I only said he'd pay us back. I

don't care a damn if he doesn't.' This was true. Although it was harder for McCracken than the others to part with his shillings he did it without grudging. Only being a Northern, and constitutionally sensitive to the value of money, he realised even while he gave that Benedict would some day repay him.

All three returned together into the sitting-room. Daly, cash in hand, approached Benedict. He spoke with careful levity:

'By the way, Kavanagh, it just occurred to us. You may be a little short of the needful. There's a few bob here. We don't want it. Shan't be having any fun while you're away, you know. Better take it. Pay it back any time you like. No hurry in the world.'

Benedict looked at the money. McCracken had laid it on the corner of the table. His eyes suddenly filled with tears.

'I can't,' he said. 'I can't take your money. I'll go down to the office and ask my boss for some.'

'Rot!' said Daly. 'What's the good of giving yourself away like that?'

'I won't take it. Oh, you fellows are too good to me. But I know very well—I won't take your money.'

Then—for there were signs of imminent weeping in Benedict's face—Daly's temper seemed to give way suddenly. He spoke fiercely, garnishing his sentences with oaths.

'Don't be a bloody ass, Kavanagh. I won't stand any more of your damned side. You nearly snapped the face off me this morning at breakfast with your cursed high and mighty airs. I'll see you in hell before I'll put up with any more of it. Drat it all! there's only a few bob. What's that to make such an infernal fuss about?'

He and the others left the room hurriedly.

Benedict took up the money. He guessed very accurately what the gift meant. The term was

almost over. All his three friends were going home for the long summer holiday. In a couple of days they would be travelling on different lines of railway, north, west, and south. The money he held in his hand had been sent by careful parents for the purchase of railway tickets, the payment of car-drivers, and such expenses. Now it had been given to him. Yet the journeys could not be postponed. Nor were fresh supplies of money to be hoped for. It was clearly obvious to Benedict that the difficulty could be met only in very painful ways. Dunne had a new suit of clothes made of grey flannel. In it he had hoped to cut a gay figure at provincial tennis parties. Now the beautiful garments would repose for months, perhaps, on a pawnbroker's shelf. Daly would in like manner dispose of a gold watch, his grandfather's watch. When he got home, Daly would disguise the fact that he no longer carried the watch in his pocket, would evade inquiries, would probably in the end lie about the watch until he got money enough to redeem it. McCracken, with neither new clothes nor gold watch, would sell—actually sell outright—expensive books. The fat tomes of legal wisdom, over the buying of which Dr. McCracken had grumbled, would now pass for half their value into the possession of some second-hand bookseller. Then for a long time the three young men would go with a limited supply of tobacco, would refuse to take part in pleasure parties, hoarding shillings till they could win enough to buy their sacrificed belongings back again. Benedict understood all this, and realised with keen self-reproach that the men who had made such a sacrifice were men whom he was accustomed to despise. He had sneered at their pleasures while he joined in them—sneered at their cheerful pleasantries, imagined himself to be superior to them because he read books and they did not care for books. But what had he got out of his books? A ridiculous conceit of himself; a perfectly wrong estimate of his

own value. Daly, Dunne, and McCracken, Cracky, the friend and admirer of Nurse Bodkin, were, he knew now, greater and better men than he was. They were capable, without poetic heroics, of doing a noble thing. He, reading great things, enjoying high emotions, was selfish, base, and mean.

His thoughts wandered from his friends to Canon Hamilton, lying ill, dying, perhaps dead, in the Rectory at Killard. There passed across his memory a panorama of incidents and scenes of his boyhood all connected with the old man. He remembered how he had knelt at family prayer in the Rectory dining-room; how, as he grew up, he had learned to scoff at the husky 'Amens' of the old housekeeper, and seen the incongruity of posing the great Bible among the plates and cups and crumbs of the breakfast-table. 'A family altar reared above a reeking sacrifice of bacon and eggs,' he had called it, pluming himself upon having hatched an epigram. Now, in the light of his new self-contempt, and with the fear that the old Canon would meander through his prayers no more, Benedict achieved a strangely clear vision of the simple cleanness of the things he had once despised. He remembered words spoken before his confirmation, simple warnings against the deadliness of sin, high teachings of unselfishness, purity, and honour. Then he had taken them for commonplaces, wearisome, and in reality meaningless. Now he understood very clearly in the light of the experience of the night before what sin really was—something not very delicious even in the enjoyment of it, bitter and dusty in the mouth afterwards. Canon Hamilton had once seemed a purveyor of senile platitudes when he spoke of unselfishness. Now Daly, Dunne, and McCracken had taught him what the word meant, how beautiful and real a thing it stood for. A hundred memories of little things touched him to impotent, despairing grief; pet names he had been called as a child; foolish games played with the old

man's smile upon him; unexpected gifts; expeditions planned for his delight; the tender laying of a hand upon his head at times of parting.

Daly returned.

'It's all right,' he said. 'I've explained everything to your boss. You've got a week's leave. No one could have been decenter than he was. Told me to say he was very sorry for you. Dunne's got a car at the door. Cracky has your things packed. We won't go to see you off. You'd rather be alone, I know. Good-bye, old chap! Good-bye and good luck! Cheer up! There may be good news waiting for you. Anyhow, you'd better be off. You've only just time to catch your train. We'll be off home before you're back. But we'll all be up again in the autumn. See you then, and have good times again. Good-bye.'

CHAPTER XVI

TRAVELLING down to Killard, Benedict remembered that during the past three years he had spent only two days at the Rectory. It had always appeared more desirable to go elsewhere for his holidays. Once he had spent a fortnight in Blackpool with a companion, since lost sight of, whose soul was sympathetic with the joys of the place. Once he had gone by himself to Scotland, and travelled, exhausting his savings, on Clyde steamers. He had worn a yachting cap and blue serge clothes that summer, and had talked largely, in the manner of a monied man, to chance strangers. He had carried secretly a copy of 'The Heart of Midlothian' in his pocket, and tried hard to realise Reuben Butler's manse while the committee of a regatta flaunted various bunting and fired guns in Rothesay Bay. Only

once had he gone to Killard, and then unwillingly. It was at Whitsuntide, when a friend with whom he had planned a cycling tour failed him suddenly. He had seen Canon Hamilton occasionally in Dublin. He remembered the look of disappointment in the old man's eyes when excuses met his invitations to the Rectory. No word of reproach had ever been spoken, but he knew now—he supposed he had really known all along—that his comings had been looked for, hoped for. But he had thought Killard dull. And it was dull. Canon Hamilton had realised that, and met the excuses half way; had even helped to defray the cost of the trip to Scotland. Benedict was smitten again with self-reproach.

The village of Killard lies four miles from the railway station, if you go by the road. But there is a short cut across fields and through a wood by which a mile may be saved. Benedict walked this way, carrying Daly's gladstone bag. It was early in June, and the corncrakes were in the meadows persistently grinding out their curious love-talk. In the wood two cuckoos shouted joyfully. Beside the stream when he crossed it he saw the irises tall and yellow like spears. Their spiked foliage, reeds with ridged central veins, clustered in the shallower parts of the water. As a boy, he had learnt from Canon Hamilton to make junk-shaped boats out of these, and had launched them precariously from the bridge. In the pasture land beyond the stream were well-grown lambs, woolly now, but still absurdly playful, teasing tired dams from whom they no longer really looked for nourishment. A group of cows stood stiff-uddered before a gate, stretching their heads over it and lowing in a long smooth manner from time to time. Back from the path he walked on were farmhouses, sheltered, mellow, from which there came a subdued noise of live things. A bee rushed toward him in homeward flight, and struck him on the cheek.

He reached the village, and saw at the cottage

doors men and women who were perfectly familiar to him. One stopped him, a young man, red-haired, and blotched about the face with great brown freckles. Benedict remembered him as a boy. They had been companions in expeditions to catch stickle-backs in the stream, and had climbed together for woodquests' eggs.

'He's gone, Master Benedict—gone since the morn yesterday. Aye, it's sad. It isn't every day we'll get the likes of him.'

So this was the news. Benedict had feared it. Then an older man, a man of nearly sixty years, grizzled, lean, and hardy, took him by the hand.

'You'll have heard—aye, you'll have heard. Heavy tidings for you and for us. He was a man, Master Benedict—you may say a man. We knew that rightly. I mind old Dr. Drew of Belfast when I was a lad; and I mind Johnston of Ballykillbeg—I mind him well—and he was a man that was afeard of nobody; and I mind Dr. Kane, the Grand Master; and I've heard tell of Hugh Hanna, though I don't mind ever seeing him; aye, and more, plenty more, and I say to you that him that's gone was fit to stand beside the best of them.'

So they spoke to him one by one as he passed through the village—hard-featured, grim men, who stood erect and smoked solemnly. Benedict realised that Canon Hamilton's life was notable for one achievement, and it no small or easy one. It is given to very few to win the hearts of the Ulster Irish. The thing is not to be accomplished by loud talking, by pandering to cherished prejudices, by showy charities or easy-going kindness. The man whom these northern peasants love must be strong and brave, for they themselves come of a race which knows no fear, because it has never yet been beaten or cowed. He need not be a clever man. They do not value cleverness very highly. But he must be absolutely honest, for they have some touchstone of their own by which they detect pretence infallibly,

distinguishing sham from reality as surely as they recognise the difference between blustering and courage. And these men had loved and trusted Canon Hamilton.

Benedict passed up the drive to the Rectory stirred by a new feeling of pride in the man who was gone. He felt rise in him the desire to live himself in some such plain, great way—to inherit when all was over the praise of strong men. He understood quite clearly that he could not be quite as Canon Hamilton was, and that for a very simple reason. He did not believe the creed Canon Hamilton believed; nor could he look on life, on Ireland, on political questions unflinchingly from the same standpoint. Still, with some other beliefs it ought to be possible to be clean and strong.

The housekeeper met him at the door. Her eyes were dry, the lines on her face, precise as at other times, gave no hint of recent blurring such as comes with tears. Her voice was steady and passionless as he remembered it. There was no sign of emotional forgetfulness of outward detail in her neat gown and starched apron. Yet Benedict, understanding many things since he had passed through the village and heard the men talk, had no doubt that she was feeling strongly and would feel enduringly.

‘Is that you, Master Benedict? You’re home too late. He’s gone. You’ll not see him any more, though you may see the corpse. No, nor he won’t see you again in this world though he’d have liked well to see you before he went.’

Benedict felt the point of her reproach. Already he was smitten, and his heart was sore with the recollection of the holidays spent elsewhere.

‘What ailed you that you did not come to us? You knew rightly that he’d be thinking long for the sight of you; wearying for you, so he was, and you off gadding and doing little good, I’m afeard.’

‘I ought to have come, Mrs. Maclure. I know

now that I ought to have come, and I'm sorry I didn't.'

'You'll be sorry, then, till the day of your death if there's a spark of the grace of God in you. And you ought to be sorry, so I tell you plain. I'm one that says what I think to a body's face, aye, to the face of master or minister, and I'd have said as much to him that's gone if I'd thought he needed words of mine. But I've said my say now, and I'll say no more. Come in with you. You must be near famished. Come in, and I'll get you your supper. I've a bit of cold meat and a bap left on the table for you, and I'll boil an egg for you. Mr. Charles Beauford's in there.' She pointed to the dining-room. 'He came by the train before yours. And there's a man in with him, a minister. They've had their supper this hour and more. But that needn't hinder you from eating your bit.'

She laid her hand upon the door to open it.

'Wait a minute,' said Benedict. 'I must go up to my room and wash my hands. I've been travelling all day, and it was very dusty in the train.'

'Well, go along with you. I'll send Susan up with the hot water to you. I suppose you'll be wanting it, and the egg will be boiled and maybe a bit of toast for you against you come down.'

In fact, Benedict looked forward with some discomfort and shyness to meeting Charles Beauford, and did not wish to plunge into the company of so grand a gentleman dirty and dishevelled.

He knew something of Charles Beauford through the columns of the newspapers. There he had figured at first chiefly as a clever barrister making brilliant speeches in attack or defence, cross-examining witnesses. Afterwards he became more famous as a political orator, in and out of parliament. He championed the cause of the Irish Unionist with vigour and persistence. Benedict remembered that Mr. McCreery, in remote Dunbeg, used to read and rejoice over Charles Beauford's attacks upon the

weakness and vacillation of the Irish administration; used to quote with approval his advocacy of a policy of firmness and an unswerving enforcement of law and order. On several occasions Mr. McCreery had himself supplied the material for questions which were supposed to have greatly embarrassed the chief secretary of the day. Once, while he was living in Dublin, Benedict had strayed into a meeting of people who wanted to protest against the teaching of the Irish language in schools. Charles Beauford was the principal speaker on the occasion. He was extremely witty in the early part of his speech, and Benedict, with the rest of the audience, had laughed heartily. Then, becoming suddenly serious, he had pleaded with deep pathos the cause of the poor children who were to be handicapped on their way through life with totally useless knowledge. He fiercely and eloquently denounced the authorities who permitted such injustice for the sake of pleasing a 'handful of dishonest fanatics.' The audience cheered this part of the speech greatly, but Benedict was not moved to any special enthusiasm. He recollected Mr. Doyne and the Gaelic League at Dunbeg, and he did not think they could fairly be described as dishonest men. Besides, he doubted whether men were ever at the same moment both dishonest and fanatical. He felt a suspicion that the orator was quite clever enough to understand the contradiction between the two words, and had used them simply for the sake of producing an effect on an audience so ready to be influenced in one direction as to have surrendered all powers of reasoning.

He recollected the occasion on which Charles Beauford had first addressed the Orangemen at Killard. He had been much impressed then, and had cheered quite as heartily as anyone else. Looking back now he could not discover what had impressed him. Nothing of what he heard remained in his memory. On the other hand, he had a vivid recollection of having been snubbed afterwards, the

next morning, at the Rectory. Charles Beauford was a man of the world, with fine manners and the air of a grand gentleman. Benedict was then an awkward schoolboy. Charles Beauford was a clever man, rising, and likely to rise very high; Benedict was lumpish and shy. Very likely, he reflected as he washed his hands, there had been no snubbing at all, only such distance between them as circumstances made inevitable.

When Benedict entered the dining-room he found there a rotund clergyman, seated in Canon Hamilton's chair, talking steadily to a tall, well-dressed man who sat opposite him looking very weary. Indeed, Charles Beauford had suffered a good deal since his arrival at Killard. The clergyman, rejoicing in an opportunity of getting into personal touch with a Member of Parliament, had met him at the station. Introducing himself as Canon Hamilton's nearest clerical neighbour, he had plied Charles Beauford so persistently with suggestions for the arrangements of the funeral that the offer of a seat on the car became unavoidable. Arriving at the Rectory, he had continued talking until he was invited to stay for supper. The look of placid contentment on his face, and the fact that the two bottom buttons of his waistcoat were undone, witnessed to his having enjoyed his meal. Afterwards he talked again, and when Benedict arrived had worked back to the subject of the funeral.

Charles Beauford rose and greeted Benedict.

'You are Benedict Kavanagh, I think. The housekeeper told me she expected you. I am very glad to see you.'

His tone was quite sincere. He would probably have been glad under the circumstances of the presence of any third person. The clergyman also greeted Benedict, but less cordially. He sat down again, and plunged afresh into his subject while Benedict ate.

'The Archdeacon will be here to read part of the

service. I took upon myself to wire to him yesterday immediately after the Canon's death. I thought he was the proper person to officiate. I hope I did right.'

'Quite right, quite right,' said Charles Beauford. He was not certain, but he thought he had heard about the telegram to the Archdeacon before.

'I saw to the digging of the grave this afternoon. It is lined with moss. I thought you'd like to have it lined with moss. It gives a more—an appearance of—a, what I may call—'

'It does,' said Charles Beauford. 'It does. You were quite right to have it lined with moss.'

The clergyman went on to say that he had arranged for a number of men from the village to carry the coffin to the church. That would, he thought, be more suitable, more impressive, than hiring a hearse. The chief mourners, Mr. Beauford and Benedict, would walk immediately behind the coffin.

'And after you will march the representatives of the neighbouring Orange lodges. There was a suggestion that they should wear their regalia——'

'Their what?' asked Charles Beauford.

'Their regalia, sashes and so forth, and that the Canon's sash should be laid on his coffin. I objected to that. It seemed to me to be most unsuitable. The sash is bright red with a gold fringe. I objected strongly—at a funeral, you know. I'm afraid the men weren't satisfied. They said that he—that is to say, Canon Hamilton—always hung the sash over the edge of the pulpit when he preached to them on the twelfth, or the Sunday after, as the case might be, and that what is right in the pulpit couldn't be wrong on a coffin. There may be a little ill-feeling about it. I thought it right to let you know.'

'Oh, if there's strong feeling on the subject,' said Charles Beauford, 'you'd better put the sash on the coffin. After all, there's no difference between that

and the custom of putting an officer's sword and helmet and medals and things on his coffin. Where is the sash?'

The clergyman seemed dissatisfied, but was not silenced. He went on, piling detail upon detail, until no smallest matter remained unmentioned. Benedict finished his coffee, and lay back patiently in his chair. But even seemingly interminable discourses reach an end in time. The clergyman rose to go. Then, struck by a sense of the duties of his pastoral office, sat down again.

'You will feel our dear friend's loss severely, Mr. Beauford, and you too, Mr. Kavanagh, perhaps even more severely.'

Benedict became aware that he was about to be comforted. He suspected that phrases, well-worn phrases, platitudes, would be laid on him like stripes; that a religious turn would be given to the talk, that very likely verses of scripture would be quoted. He hardened his heart to endure.

'No doubt you will feel it, but at Canon Hamilton's age death must be expected. He had long overpast the allotted span. Threescore years and ten, says the psalmist.'

Something in Charles Beauford's face stopped the flow of words for a moment, changed the direction of the current when the speaker began again.

'Yes, he was an old man. He belonged to another generation. He had many ideas which we have outgrown now-a-days. I have always regarded his attachment to the Orange order as a mistake. The Orangemen are a narrow-minded set of men, bitterly Protestant, very troublesome in the parish, always getting up rows of one kind or another. It was a pity for a man like Canon Hamilton, a fine man in his way, and a gentleman, to countenance them as he did.'

To Benedict this criticism was even less agreeable than the consolation that had preceded it. He did not want to hear this clergyman's opinion of Canon

Hamilton. The utterance of it struck him as indecent.

Mrs. Maclure entered somewhat noisily, and began to clear away the supper things.

'You'll be tired, Master Benedict,' she said, eyeing the stranger. 'I have your room ready for you. There'll be nothing more you'll want the night?'

The clergyman rose again.

'I ought to be saying good-night. I'll be round again to-morrow morning to see you, Mr. Beauford. If anything occurs to you in the meanwhile, let me know then. It will be nothing but pleasure to me—a melancholy pleasure—to help you in any way I can on this sad occasion. But I think that the arrangements that we have made will prove satisfactory. I left my cycle in the porch here before I went up to meet you at the train. Oh, don't trouble to come out, and don't you trouble, Mr. Kavanagh. I can find it all right.'

Benedict watched him light a bicycle lamp, and then, after bidding him a really final good-night, returned into the house. Mrs. Maclure also watched the departure.

'He's gone, Master Benedict?' Her tone suggested that she was asking a question. Then she added emphatically: 'Time for him. Only for his coming along with Mr. Beauford I wouldn't have let him in at all.'

Benedict re-entered the dining-room, and found Charles Beauford with a smile of relief on his face.

'Thank God that man's gone!' he said. 'I never met such a talker. All parsons talk too much, and talk about such unimportant things. I dare say that you've noticed that.'

Benedict was agreeably surprised. It is nice to hear frank abuse of a departed guest. So a feeling is engendered in the listener's mind that he is, compared to the one who has gone, good company, a pleasant fellow, a companionable person. To be

admitted to such an alliance with a great man, a rising barrister, and a Member of Parliament, is particularly agreeable. Benedict smiled.

‘He seemed determined to get the funeral properly arranged.’

‘Country parsons,’ Charles Beauford went on, without apparently heeding Benedict’s remark, ‘are much worse than the others. I don’t know whether you are well acquainted with the cloth. I am. I was brought up in the thick of them. The town parson isn’t so bad, because he has some idea of time. He owes it to his reputation as a hard-working man to keep up an appearance of being in a hurry. He fusses in on you and fusses out again, mentioning that he is already twenty minutes late for an important engagement. He worries, of course, but he doesn’t worry for long. To the country parson an hour is as nothing. No one would believe he had anything to do, even if he swore it on a Bible, so there’s nothing to prevent his talking to you all day and half the night.’

To Benedict this kind of talk was new. It was much more agreeable to listen to than the local gossip of Dunbeg or the slang and swagger of his friends in Dublin. He began to feel very much at his ease.

‘I haven’t known many parsons,’ he said. ‘The only one I ever knew well was Canon Hamilton.’

‘Ah yes, of course. You knew the poor old Canon very well. Somehow I never used to think of him as a parson at all. He always used to give me the impression of being a gentleman. I don’t mean to say that the others aren’t gentlemen too. Lots of them are. Only it’s the sort of thing you find out about them afterwards. There’s a kind of man you meet, and say at once, “Hullo! here’s a parson.” It’s not the clothes. You’d say just the same if you came across him in a turkish bath. Then, when you’ve known him for perhaps a year, you discover with a shock of surprise that he’s also a gentleman. Now, with Canon Hamilton it was the exact opposite.

You hadn't been in his company ten minutes before you knew that you were talking to a gentleman. Then, after a while, you were astonished at not having remembered sooner that he was a parson.'

To Benedict this flippant appreciation of the Canon was no more pleasant to listen to than the clergyman's criticism. The solemn praise of the men in the village street suited better his own serious mood. Charles Beauford smothered a yawn.

'I'm getting as bad as any parson in the way of talking. And perhaps you really are tired, as that blessed woman, the housekeeper, suggested. She saved us. Only for her hint that man would have sat on till midnight. "Sic me servavit Apollo." You know your Horace, don't you? Apollo—or in this case we ought perhaps to say Artemis—Artemis in a black gown and a white apron preserved us, for which we ought to offer the proper sacrifices. I'm going into the study to write some letters. By the way, I have a packet of papers addressed to you by the poor Canon. Wait a moment, and I'll bring them to you. He appears to have been anxious to give them to you himself. But of course the end came very rapidly, and you were not here in time. The housekeeper gave me the packet as soon as I arrived. She said he had it under his pillow when he died. He made her bring it up from his study so that he might have it ready when you came. I'll just fetch them, and then we can say good-night, and each of us go off to bed just as we happen to feel sleepy.'

CHAPTER XVII

CHARLES BEAUFORD returned with a packet, which he laid on the table, and then, with a friendly 'good-night,' retired. Benedict recognised Canon Hamil-

ton's writing in the address, and saw that the parcel was carefully tied and sealed. He tore off the outer wrapper, and found three bundles of papers. On top of them lay a letter from Canon Hamilton. He read:

‘MY DEAR BOY,

‘I have never told you anything about either your father or your mother. Their story was not one which it was pleasant to repeat. Perhaps I ought to have told it to you sooner, but I shrank from doing so, and you, on your part, never expressed any great curiosity on the subject. You will remember that you seldom asked any questions about your own origin, and even when you did you were easily contented with evasive answers. This made it easier for me to put off telling you about your parents, and I think to some extent justified me in concealing their history from you.’

Benedict remembered that this was true. He had never felt any special desire to know who his father and mother were, but had been satisfied to accept his position as Canon Hamilton's ward without questioning. Now he wondered how he could have been content in such ignorance.

‘Even now, though you will not read this letter until after I am dead, I do not feel that I can tell you your mother's story. If you want to know it, you must ask Lady Beauford or Mr. Charles Beauford to tell it to you. But I am placing in your hands papers which are all that remain to tell you what kind of man your father was. I did not know him, but I knew his reputation well. His name, like yours, was Benedict Kavanagh. He was one of Mr. Parnell's followers in the early days of the land agitation. He was a singularly able man. I used to think also a singularly unscrupulous man; but standing now near the hour at which I must meet my Maker, I am

above all anxious to judge no one harshly. I will say no more than that your father was grievously mistaken in advocating the cause to which he devoted himself.'

Benedict paused. He knew very well the opinions of the Canon on political matters. He had himself been brought up to think that the land agitation was a conspiracy organised by wicked men, having for its objects robbery and murder. This had been Canon Hamilton's view. Benedict had heard it expressed in conversation, in speeches, and in sermons. He had never questioned it. He supposed that for a time and to some extent he had accepted it. Latterly it had lain, a piece of lumber, in some obscure corner of his mind. He no longer believed it to be true, but he had not replaced it with any other opinion. He had simply taken no interest in the matter, or not enough interest to make it worth his while to formulate a theory of his own. Now, when it appeared that his father had been one of the agitators, the subject suddenly sprang into importance. Also he had always heard that Home Rule meant Rome Rule. This was an axiom with Canon Hamilton. Benedict had never really questioned it. Rome Rule, he had heard it a thousand times, meant the introduction into Ireland of a tyranny, of the Spanish Inquisition, and the rekindling of the fires of Smithfield. This, too, in a passive way, he supposed that he believed. At least, he had never had occasion to question or disbelieve. But now he learned that his father had been one of those who laboured and struggled for Home Rule. It became all at once of pressing importance to him to understand the matter. He went on reading the letter.

'He died in great poverty at a comparatively early age, and the responsibility for bringing you up devolved upon me. You will readily understand how it was that I never cared to speak about your father;

but I think that, however painful the truth may be, you ought to know it, now you are a man.'

Benedict did understand exactly how Canon Hamilton had felt about the matter. If a man is hanged for a cold-blooded and deliberate murder, or if he dies in prison while working out a sentence passed on him for forgery, it is better, kinder, to conceal the fact from his children as long as possible. A Nationalist politician was, in Canon Hamilton's opinion, a murderer in intention if not in fact—a robber, and none the less dishonest because his robberies were ultimately legalised by Act of Parliament. But Benedict already revolted against these judgments. He refused to regard his father as a criminal. He sat for a while thinking, with the three piles of papers on the table before him. He felt drawn to the memory of this father of his—one of the ablest, as even his enemies admitted, of a band of very able men; one of the most unscrupulous too. But that was Canon Hamilton's judgment. Possible—indeed, he felt almost certainly—it would have to be modified, revised, perhaps reversed. There were still a few sentences left unread of the letter in his hand.

'The papers which now come into your possession were found in your father's room after he died, and were handed to me. I do not know whether they will be of any special interest or value to you. They were in great confusion when I got them. I did not read them. I simply glanced at them and divided them into three bundles according to the handwriting. The first of the three contains papers written by different people, apparently letters to your father from various correspondents. In the second bundle are cuttings from newspapers, and manuscript notes all written by your father himself. The third, the smallest bundle, contains letters which are all in the handwriting of one woman. I know the writing, and can assure you that the letters are your mother's. I

do not think you ought to read them. Such letters are intended only for the eyes of one man, and it seems to me to be clearly your duty to burn them. In any case, whether you decide to burn them or not, I beseech you not to read them until after you have heard your mother's story.'

Benedict had no doubt at all that Canon Hamilton was right about his mother's letters. He took the smallest bundle, saw that all the letters in it were in a woman's writing, carried them over to the empty grate, and set fire to them. It would have been an impiety, an act of hideous sacrilege to read them.

Then he sat down again, and opened the larger of the other two packets. It contained letters of various dates which dealt with a variety of subjects. Some were very short, no more than mere notes giving the date and hour of some engagement. Others were longer, descriptive of work done, of difficulties which lay in the way of some scheme, of opposition to be met. These often contained requests for advice and help. A few were much longer, and these were signed with famous names. Occasionally a policy was outlined, a plan of action suggested, and reasons were set out why one course was desirable, another dangerous. Very much of what he read was quite unintelligible to Benedict. References were made to events of which he had never heard, and to people whose names were quite strange to him. He arranged the letters, laying aside the shorter ones and those written by people unknown to him, local secretaries of Land League branches, organisers of meetings and demonstrations. There remained a dozen or so long letters written at different times by three or four of the leaders of the party to which his father had belonged. These he read and re-read. Gradually he came to understand, not the circumstances described, but the spirit of the writers. He breathed the atmosphere of the land war in the days when its conflicts were fiercest. Here were men fight-

ing desperately against almost hopeless odds; men despised, then vilified, then passionately hated by everyone who had power in the state, or riches or much learning, or great position. They had no allies whom anyone then counted valuable, and no backing except the voices of a peasantry still cowed after centuries of servility. Benedict became much excited. It was as if the hot breath of some old battle where men strove hand to hand were blown suddenly into his face, as if he heard the cries and curses of the fighters.

Then he tried to understand it all. What had his father and the others been fighting for? Liberty? They wrote about that. Justice? They claimed to want that too—justice, bare justice, for the oppressed, the poor. The people? The land? The words occurred in the letters and recurred. Ireland? The name was there. In the letters of these greater men it met him frequently. In the other letters not so often, or not at all. The whole thing seemed very confused. He was not sure whether the struggle was one for nationality, a battle with patriotism as the animating motive of the soldiers; or a class struggle, a servile war, the revolt of a peasantry against its masters; or a revolution, the frantic clutching of blood-stained hands at the elusive figure of liberty. Whatever it all meant, one thing was clear. In this intense, absorbing, frenzied struggle his father had been a fighter, one of the fiercest and strongest. And therefore—his thoughts shot back suddenly—therefore his father was an outcast, a disreputable man, one abhorrent to Canon Hamilton and his like. Benedict became strongly indignant. There was very much about the mere struggling against long odds, for any cause good or bad, which appealed to him. He felt that he himself also was a fighter, a rebel, an aggressor.

Then he remembered that Canon Hamilton also in his day had been a fighter; that the men who had spoken to him in the village, the strong, hard,

northern Irishmen who talked sternly of Rome Rule, and inquisitions and Smithfield fires, were all of them fighters. He knew that they were not less determined and eager than his father had been, or the others who wrote the letters. But these had all been on the other side. What other side? He knew very well that Canon Hamilton claimed to stand for liberty and the right of each man to live his life out in his own way. He understood that the fundamental instinct of the Orangemen was loathing of tyranny. He realised, for he had lived with him, that Canon Hamilton also loved Ireland, boasted of his country, and believed that he sought her good. Were there two Irelands? Two liberties? Two justices? Or were the combatants in this old conflict bewitched?

Benedict left questioning. It was enough for him to feel his blood surge hot with great excitement, to know that his father had played a part, and no small one, in a great drama which the world had watched. A Benedict Kavanagh, his father, had been one of the scorned group of men who faced and conquered a powerful aristocracy, flung insults at the mightiest nation upon earth in a building counted almost consecrated by the splendour of its traditions, and in the end had been half victorious, had come, as Benedict guessed, within a very little of forcing from the unwilling hands of her conquerer a measure of freedom for Ireland.

An overmastering curiosity seized him. He wanted to come into closer touch with this father of his.

He tore the tie from the remaining parcel of papers and let them fall scattered on the table before him. They were of all sorts and sizes, some covered with manuscript, some with printed matter. Here were sheets of foolscap scribbled over from top to bottom on both sides. Benedict thrilled at the thought that this was his father's writing. Here were half-sheets of notepaper also written over closely, hotel bills with memoranda jotted down on the backs of them,

and two cheques, signed Benedict Kavanagh, apparently returned after payment by the bank. Across the backs of these, obliterating the endorsement, was written the rough draft of a letter to some newspaper. Elsewhere were heads of speeches, but without notes of time or place of delivery. Sometimes these had to do with local matters. The names were peasant names. Figures followed them, labelled acres and roods or pounds and shillings. Once or twice the figures were carefully written out, corrected, and ticked off with a pencil, as if they had been checked more than once. Evidently these were for use on some important occasion. Now and then he came across the opening sentences or the peroration of a speech written out verbatim, but with some of the words curiously contracted. Attached to one of these sheets was a cutting from a newspaper, two columns of print containing a full report of a speech. Benedict read it, and as he did so he caught his breath and gasped. The rhetoric was superb. Even now, after many years, with only print to represent the living voice, he felt the pulsation of his father's passion, stiffened at the fierce invective, glowed with the denunciation of oppression and oppressors.

Benedict had heard the old, evil days of the land war described by Canon Hamilton. He had been taught that the whole movement was rotten with dishonesty, and that the claims of the men who led it were flagrantly unjust. He had been told of the tyranny of the Land League which compelled harmless men to break the law and rush to their own ruin. He believed that there had been such tyranny. But now the very arch-tyrants themselves, and his own father among them, appeared denouncing tyranny, declaring themselves worshippers of the goddess Liberty. Were these men liars? Or were their opponents liars? Or were honesty, justice, and liberty, words of discord flung by some deity down upon the earth that men might fight each other for the sake of them, while the celestial

cynic smiled, sniffing perfume of blood, and covering the great archetypes with the skirt of his garment so that none but he should see them or know them?

Again Benedict was rescued from the entanglement of questionings by the sense of the overmastering enthusiasm which lay behind his father's acts and words. It was enough for him for the moment to feel that great things had been done by one who dared greatly and gave all. Then, turning over the papers, he came upon a poem copied out carefully. He had never seen it before, and did not know whether to regard it as his father's work or as some fugitive piece, chanced upon and preserved for its own sake. It was written in an odd, jerky metre, and it was some time before he caught the rhythm. When he did master it, he perceived it to be strangely well adapted to the sobbing passion and breathless hope which the words conveyed. It recounted a vision of the future Ireland, not sentimental but militant, with a note in it like the exultation of Deborah the prophetess over Jael's deed. It culminated in a description of the gathering to a final triumph of all the men who had ever lived and died for Ireland. Their bodies rose, maimed from prison burying-grounds, from the clay of battle-fields; worn with long travel from graves in distant lands, out of the deep sea, or fameless from forgotten resting-places near cabins in the bog-land. Souls, like flaming tongues, came to the bodies neither out of heaven nor hell, but from the bare, spacious halls which are beneath the mountains of the land. There, some for years and some for centuries, these souls had lit the still faces of the Tuath-de-Danaan warriors while they slept, and flickered restless through the ranks of the waiting horsemen of the Sidh. Now they gathered, heroes reincarnate, with noise of scabbards, spurs, and bridle steels, with clamour of trumpets and trampling of iron hooves, to join the shouted invocation of their Queen country in her glory.

Benedict panted as he read the lines. He under-

stood suddenly the great motive of his father's life. The land war had been an episode, an accident, at best a means to a great end. Beyond the dust and confusion of the fight lay quite clearly the object of it all. His father had been one of those whose life had been smitten into brightness for a while and then shrivelled by the love of Ireland. Even as he read Benedict knew that to him too the inspiration had come. The delirium had possession of his brain. For better or worse, in success or failure, he must love Ireland and live for her.

Of what such service meant, or how it was to be rendered, he had no thought; nor any wish to arrange what he knew of parties and creeds, plans, policies, and hopes into any rational order. Of the blind prejudices and selfish meannesses which tangle and tear wayfarers on the desolate roads of high endeavour he might have guessed a little but would not. Close mists, sight-hindering and poisonous, lay all across the land; but, swept by emotion, he rose to see the sun above them all, and it shone on the hill-tops, the ancient towers, and the fair, lofty places of Ireland. He felt himself already one of a great company, brother or son to the fierce men who had fought, the patient men who had waited and died waiting, the sorrowful men who had wept and sung for the dear land.

The flame of the lamp on the table shot up suddenly, flickered, and disappeared. But it was not dark. The twilight of dawn met the twilight of sunset in the short June night. He rose and flung open the window. The stillness, save for the corncrake's cry, was complete, and the air was marvellously sweet. While he stood drawing deep breaths the rooks in the near trees began to call to one another. Then a single shrill note from a blackbird waked the woods. Another and another followed, and then snatches of song. Soon, taking heart from these, a thousand birds shouted joyfully. Quivering high trills mingled and reached up to surpass each other, voices

in a fugue of inexpressible magnificence. The day was coming with its splendour and its sunlight and its life. Out of the dim twilight the birds hailed it.

Benedict turned and left the room. It was darker in the passage and on the staircase. He groped his way up, stepping cautiously. He was very cold, all of him except his head, which burned. Outside Canon Hamilton's room he paused. A dead man lay within, a good man, who had been brave and strong. Now he lay dead. Benedict shuddered. An impulse which he could not understand made him open the door of the room and enter it. The light was very dim inside, but he could discern the figure on the bed, rigid, quite still under the white coverings. The shouting of the birds came loud through the open windows. Full-voiced life rushed forward into rapturous exultation, careless, forgetful of the dead, leaving dead men to bury their dead. Yet the man who was gone had acted no ignoble part, had spoken the truth, and battled fearlessly. But he was gone. He had grown old, had stiffened in his gait, become dull of hearing and dim-eyed. Now he was dead, and the new life, vocal through a thousand throats, beating the air till it throbbed, cared nothing for him, left him shrouded in his dark room.

Benedict stood quite still, fascinated by a strange terror. At last, by a great effort, he broke the spell which lay on him, turned and went away. He reached his own room and threw himself upon his bed, torn to utter exhaustion by the emotions of the day.

CHAPTER XVIII

BENEDICT rose late in the morning, little refreshed by a broken sleep which had been full of dreams. He found that Charles Beauford had already finished

his breakfast. Benedict, his mind full of what he had read the night before, scarcely paused to greet him before saying:

‘I read through the papers you gave me last night.’

‘Yes?’

‘I suppose you know what they are?’

‘I can guess. They are papers left behind him by your father.’

‘Yes. They told me who he was. Now I want you to tell me all you can about my mother.’

‘I would rather you put off asking me about your mother. The story is a painful one to me as well as to you, and I am not sure that I am the proper person to tell it. My mother, Lady Beauford, wishes you to go to see her when you return to Dublin, and I think she means to tell you the story. She is now a very old woman and very infirm, but her mind is quite clear. She has always been interested in you, although, by my advice, she has not seen you or invited you to her house. Now that Canon Hamilton is dead, and you are left alone in the world, she wishes to meet you, and to see something of you from time to time. I know that it is her intention to advance your interests in life. You can also count on my doing what I can to help you. It was never our intention that you should remain a clerk in a land agent’s office all your life. But I cannot go into all these matters now. The people are beginning to gather for the funeral. I see a good many outside on the lawn. I suppose we ought to invite some of them into the house and talk to them until it is time to start for the church.’

Every man in the parish, and every Orangeman within a radius of twenty miles followed Canon Hamilton’s coffin into the church. There, in the plain, bare old building Benedict knew so well, they sat in straight, high-sided pews, a somewhat grim assembly, tightly-packed rows of men, solemn and, as befitted good Protestants, watchfully critical of the service conducted by the Archdeacon. One cannot

be sure in these dangerous days that Popery may not lurk unsuspected even in Paul's epistles, or break forth, pregnant with inquisitions, in some new-fangled way of reading the thirty-ninth psalm. As is customary on such occasions the Archdeacon added to the Church's service a supplementary oration of his own. The congregation expected this and each man settled himself to get full enjoyment out of the panegyric of their dead pastor. Benedict listened, at first, like the rest of the men, critically, then with interest, finally with a feeling of warm gratitude towards the speaker.

The Archdeacon spoke quite simply of Canon Hamilton's life and virtues. He picked out the really strong points of the dead man's character and dwelt on them. Most men, he said, seek wealth or fame or praise. Canon Hamilton had lived for none of these. Most men at some time or other in their lives are frightened by a popular outcry into compromise involving the sacrifice of principle or conviction. Canon Hamilton had not been, even for one hour, a coward. Most men tell lies, lies necessitated by the circumstances of intrigue, forced to the tongue by the adoption of crooked ways, tell them to gain good ends. Canon Hamilton had not, under any circumstance, told lies.

The congregation appreciated the truth of what they heard. Every man present had known Canon Hamilton. Some of them had known him very well. They had been baptised, taught, and married by him. For years they had seen his daily life. They understood the virtues of which the Archdeacon spoke. They also had an ideal before them, however far short they might come of it. Their conception of perfect manhood comprised just these virtues: fearlessness, truthfulness, and devotion to duty, without regard to consequence or hope of subsequent reward. Benedict also understood these things. And perhaps he knew better than the others what the Archdeacon meant when he went on to speak of the

source from which Canon Hamilton had drawn the strength and inspiration of his life. He recognised in the preacher's words an accurate and sympathetic account of the perfectly simple, childlike faith in God, which had so become a habit with Canon Hamilton as to lead him to submit every action of his life, and almost every thought of his heart, to the Divine approval. Benedict knew that this was all true, because he remembered quite distinctly sayings and doings, phrases, and even insignificant turns of expression, things not noticed at the time but now returning to his mind very vividly; a hundred details which convinced him of the accuracy of the description of the dead man's walk with God.

After the funeral service, Benedict returned to the Rectory. Charles Beauford declared that he would be obliged to remain at least another day in Killard to arrange for the disposal of Canon Hamilton's books and household furniture. He invited Benedict to remain also. But Benedict, wishing to be alone and to think, refused, and started for Dublin by an afternoon train, after promising to visit Lady Beauford on the next Sunday afternoon.

Indeed, he felt it impossible just then to spend an evening and a whole day with Charles Beauford. He appreciated the friendliness with which he had been treated, and felt grateful for the kind words spoken to him. But he could not listen without suffering to amusing comments on men and things, to more quotations from Horace, perhaps to shrewd, if not unkindly, estimates of Canon Hamilton's worth. Feelings and emotions of an immense and almost terrible kind had taken possession of him. He was like a man who, after dwelling for many years inland, goes on a journey and hears unexpectedly the noise of the ocean. He will not consent to stay indoors and listen to light music played upon the piano. He will go on, hurrying to see the waves rush green against the black rocks, and to satisfy his soul with gazing across limitless stretches of water. After a while he will go back

and applaud the woman who makes the sparkling music for her friends. But he cannot listen to her until his thirst for the sound and vision of the sea is quenched.

Also Benedict was unwilling to stay longer at Killard. The place seemed full of reproaches. Familiar roads reminded him, the Rectory garden, the rooms of the house, the accustomed furniture, reminded him that he had left a man who loved him to grow old in loneliness; that he had preferred base, soiled pleasure to the friendship of a good man. He did not want to meet old acquaintances again. Their greetings and strong handclasps were pain to him. Every one of the simple men who spoke to him added some fresh bitterness to his self-reproach.

During the first part of his journey back to Dublin his mind was full of the knowledge and emotion which had come to him during the last few days. He saw his own life as something appallingly base, foolish, and stupid. Going back to old days, he wondered how he could have missed seeing the goodness of Canon Hamilton; how, growing up with the love of such a man shining on him, he could have become what he was. He thought with hot shame of his flirtation with Lizzie Finlay and of the day when he tried to kiss her. He remembered each step of his downward progress in Dublin, the acceptance of a false ideal, the meaningless pursuit of things which were not pleasures, the futile attempts at spurious gaiety, the girls behind their bars, tawdry and vulgar, but, no doubt, nobler than he was. He dwelt upon the physical degradation of his drunkenness and applauded the act of the bedizened girl who had flung the water over him.

‘There has not been in all my life one noble thing, one worthy ambition.’

Canon Hamilton had lived greatly and bravely, a calm, strong life, unseen by the world, unapplauded by the crowd, but praised now, no doubt, by God. His father, Benedict Kavanagh, had also, so he under-

stood, lived greatly, fiercely, unselfishly. He had died, it seemed, poor and friendless; but before death he had lived, really lived; and after death—Benedict did not think of him as inheriting a Divine ‘Well done.’ It seemed more natural, more fitting, that he should be waiting somewhere, the prey of scarcely tolerable impatience, till the summons came to all the dead of Ireland to gather and take their part in the triumph of the land.

‘But I have no right to call myself the son of such a man, or the pupil, the friend, of the other.’

It was quite clear to him that he must break with all the ways of his old life and that at once. But after that? It was easy to admire the strong consistency of Canon Hamilton’s life. He could even appreciate, as it were from outside, the religion which lay behind it, the simple friendship with an unseen God, from intercourse with whom came strength and courage. But it was not easy for him, Benedict, to live in any such way. Was it even possible?’

For some men acute repentance after sin or baseness brings with it at once a union with the Divine. The cry of the stricken soul calls down prompt answer from its God. But this is where sin is conceived of as an offence against a person or against a law. Then forgiveness is the prime need, and the voice of God is from the first moment of sorrow plainly audible. But in Benedict’s mind his sin and his folly appeared chiefly as offences against himself, and his own forgiveness was wholly impossible, an inconceivable thing without first of all a restoration of his self-respect. To men whose repentance is of such a kind as this the way to the friendship of Jesus Christ is longer and harder to travel. Very often they do not succeed in travelling the whole of it before they die. It is much rarer to reach the great friendship by the way of self-amendment than by the other way of self-abandonment. Therefore it seemed to Benedict, and it really was, impossible for him to live at once Canon Hamilton’s life, because

he had no means of drawing on the source of Canon Hamilton's inspiration or his treasury of strength.

Could he any more easily live his father's life? That had been inspired also by an enthusiasm, a flaming passion for Ireland and for liberty. Benedict had felt himself touched with the same enthusiasm the night before while he read the letters. Now, in this recurring mood of self-reproach, he doubted the reality of it. He thought back with pitiful hopelessness over his own life, and failed to recall one burst of unselfish devotion. Yes. He recollected just one occasion on which a fine feeling had stirred him. It was when Mr. Doyne had begun to teach him Irish, when he sat with the carter and the shop-boy and the others in the bare room in Dunbeg. Then, he remembered, the phrases he heard had made a strange appeal to him. The words were from the language of his heart.

The train stopped at a wayside station, and a young priest came into the compartment where Benedict sat. He wore a long black coat, the garment affected by clergy of almost every creed, perhaps because its peculiar hideousness reminds them all day long that they have renounced the vanities of life. On this priest it was uglier even than it need have been, because he had stuffed its pockets with things that bulged. He carried an umbrella, very curious to look at on the blazing June day. He had on his head a soft felt hat. Benedict watched, and saw him take from his pocket a small, thick book. From this he read his office, his lips moving rapidly as they formed words which were evidently very familiar. He seemed wholly attentive to what he read, and took no notice of his fellow passenger. Benedict, weary of self-communing, felt a strong curiosity about this man. What did this reading of his mean? Was it the mere mechanical performance of a duty laid upon him from outside by some authority? Or did he find some strength,

some bread of life in the hundred times repeated words?

The priest's face was lean; the cheek-bones and the jaw obtruded themselves, looking like hard knots above sunk flesh. There were deep lines round the mouth and eyes suggestive of much suffering, perhaps of great physical pain once borne; or pain of the mind, the soul, still pressing, or—Benedict looked more curiously at the face—the traces of the continued stress of high endeavour. Conscious for an instant of Benedict's gaze, the priest raised his eyes from his book. They were grey, clear eyes, wonderfully bright and intelligent; also there shone out of them a light from within, a light not of this world at all. But besides the brightness there was in them a look of great patience which harmonised well with the lines round the mouth. Patience is a hard thing to learn, so hard that the learning of it takes most men a whole life-time; and yet this priest was a young man. A small firm mouth told of self-command, of sway over bodily desires, absolute, because for such a man not over difficult of attainment.

After a while the priest closed his book, and replaced it in his pocket; drawing out instead of it a newspaper. Benedict glanced at it. He wanted to know what besides his breviary this priest with the spiritual face chose to read. It was a copy of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the weekly organ of the Gaelic League. Benedict did not know it, and had not the faintest idea of what its contents might be; but he saw that it was printed in Irish, and he could make out the letters, and here and there a word which he could read.

Benedict's curiosity about the priest grew greater, and there rose in him a desire to speak to him. He did not in the least understand why he should want to do such a thing. He had no love for priests. Brought up among Orangemen, he had learned to hate and distrust them all. His brief experience of

Father Heatly's methods in Dunbeg left him with the idea that priests loved worrying and bullying helpless people. Yet now he wanted to speak to the man in front of him. He wished much that the priest would speak first. But he did not speak. He read slowly, and with evident interest, the paper in his hand.

The train stopped again, and Benedict watched with a quite unreasonable fear lest the priest should alight, or lest another passenger should get in and make it impossible for him to speak. He felt that he could not speak in the presence of a third person; a ridiculous idea, for he had nothing particular to say, and would, if he spoke at all, utter only a commonplace. But the train started again, leaving him undisturbed. Then there began a kind of struggle in Benedict's mind.

'I will not speak to this man. Why should I speak to him?'

There was no reason why he should.

'I must speak to him. I must. What shall I say?'

He did not understand whence this impulse came or how it gathered strength; but very soon he knew that there was no use his fighting against it. It would certainly conquer him in the end. And then he would speak, though what he was to say or how he was to get any good by speaking he could not tell.

'Speak to him. Speak to him now. Never mind what you say, but speak.'

It seemed to Benedict that a voice from outside, someone else's voice, was issuing an order to him which very soon he would be obliged to obey.

The priest laid down his paper, and looked up with an interrogation in his eyes. It was as if Benedict had spoken and been only half heard. He had not spoken. He was sure of that. But the priest was evidently expecting him to speak, was waiting to reply to him. Benedict's eyes fell before the simple gaze that met them, and wandered, seek-

ing some object to rest upon. They came to the paper with the Irish print lying on the seat.

'Yes?' said the priest. He spoke exactly as if Benedict had begun some sentence and not finished it.

'Do you know Mr. Doyne?' Benedict blurted out his question. He could not tell why he asked such a foolish thing. Perhaps there was some rapid connection of thought between the print his eyes rested on and the man who, many years before, had spoken to him in the Irish tongue.

The priest smiled gently.

'I know—let me see—I know five Mr. Doynes. I am sure there are at least a hundred more whom I might know and don't. I wonder if your Mr. Doyne is one of my five or of the other hundred.'

'The Mr. Doyne I mean is a Gaelic Leaguer.'

The priest replied at once in Irish. But Benedict shook his head. He did not understand a word that was said to him.

'I am not a member of the Gaelic League, and I am afraid I do not understand Irish.'

'Then you can hardly be a friend of Paudraig Doyne's. If you were he would be sure to have made a Gaelic Leaguer of you. He's never happy unless he's persuading someone or other to learn Irish.'

There was something very unexpected and very charming in the way the priest spoke. Almost always there is a restraint, partly apologetic, partly self-assertive, which comes on men with ordination, and holds them apart from the common laity. The more completely the fact of ordination is realised the more marked does this aloofness become. But there was not a trace of it in the manner of the priest who spoke to Benedict. Priest he was certainly; his dress proclaimed it. But he was also man, and a man who possessed the most wonderful of all human powers, the power of sympathy. It was impossible to listen to him, even for a few moments, impossible to see

his smile and feel his gaze without knowing that he thought nothing of himself, his dignity, or the impression he was making, but very much of the person, man, woman, or child to whom he spoke.

‘I think,’ said Benedict, ‘that it must be my friend then. He would have made me learn Irish if he had had time, and his name was Patrick. It is a good while ago that I knew him. Three or four years, and he didn’t know much Irish himself then, but he was trying very hard to learn.’

‘Ah! no doubt it is the same man. Curiously enough, I am going up to Dublin to see him now. I hope to spend two days with him. It is always a pleasure to me to have a talk with Paudraig Doyne.’

‘Does he live in Dublin now?’

‘He has been there for the last six months. I knew him before he went to Dublin, but lately have not seen him often. He was once in the west, in a parish where I was curate. But I was not there for very long. Since then we have known each other chiefly by correspondence.’

Benedict caught at the news that Patrick Doyne was in Dublin. He remembered very distinctly the man’s quiet enthusiasm for the Irish language, his steadfastness and persistence amid great discouragement. It seemed to him now that it might be possible to share such enthusiasm, and that he also might be able to live for an idea as Patrick Doyne did.

‘I shall want to tell Paudraig that I met an old friend of his in the train,’ said the priest. ‘I must be able to tell him who you are.’

Benedict did not answer the implied question. His mind was working on a different thought.

‘Why are you and Mr. Doyne so anxious to revive the Irish language? What good is it?’

‘You have asked me a very hard question,’ said the priest, ‘and I cannot answer you, seeing that you are an outsider as you say. I don’t think that any-

one has yet answered that question, and I doubt if anyone at present can explain what we are doing or why it is good. Some day, when the work is done, and Irishmen are speaking their own language again, a man will arise who will be able to explain why Ireland could not be Ireland without its language. In the meanwhile we work to restore it to the people's lips simply because we love it and love them. Are you an Irishman? I think you are. Then if you will learn a little, even quite a little, of the language, you will love it too, and will feel at once, even if you do not understand, what good it is to us.'

Benedict sat silent. He remembered that he had once felt what the priest hinted at, the strange fascination of the ancient tongue. Even now, though the speech he listened to was English, he felt himself coming under the spell of the spirit of the Gaelic. The priest in some way represented to him that spirit, and imparted it to him. He looked up and met the clear grey eyes fixed upon his face. There was love in them, and a sort of hopefulness of some great good, far off but certain to be realised in the end. The priest was like the language: he seemed to Benedict to be what he was because of the language which was familiar and dear to him.

'You have not told me yet what your name is, and you really must, for Paudraig will never forgive me if I cannot tell him who you are.'

'My name is Benedict Kavanagh. But I am sure that Mr. Doyne will have forgotten all about me.'

'Indeed, he has not forgotten you. He has several times spoken to me about you. He told me about your life in Dunbeg.'

'Then I'm afraid he told you little good about me.'

'You are wrong. He told me what seemed to me a great deal of good about you. He told me that you had a heart and a head, that you could feel and understand.'

'Then he told you more good than truth of me.'

The priest took no notice of the remark, perhaps because it was made in a tone of hopeless bitterness.

‘You must come and see Paudraig. Here is his address.’

He scribbled it on a slip of paper. ‘Can you come to-morrow evening? On Saturday I shall be obliged to go home again, back to the west. But I should like to see you before I go, and have a talk with you. My name is Lawrence O’Meara.’

‘Father O’Meara!’ said Benedict. ‘Why, Mr. Doyne was always talking about you. I think you were a hero in his eyes.’

He remembered how Doyne had spoken of Father O’Meara, how every good thing had been referred to this priest and every failure traced to his absence from Dunbeg. He remembered, too, how, on the very first evening of his arrival there, he had read, sitting by the fire in Mr. McCreery’s office, the account which the local paper printed of the presentation made to this priest. Now, having met the man and talked to him, though only for a little while, Benedict began to understand why he had been loved and trusted.

CHAPTER XIX

ON Friday evening Benedict made his way to Mr. Doyne’s house. He found Father O’Meara sitting by the open window of the room, reading. He rose at once, and welcomed Benedict warmly.

‘Paudraig will be in soon,’ he said. ‘He went out after we had our dinner to see a man who lives near this about an entertainment we are going to this evening; but he won’t be long.’

‘Oh, I didn’t know you had any engagement. Perhaps I’d better not stay. I could easily come again another evening.’

'It's only a Gaelic League meeting that we're going to, and we want to take you with us if you'll come. It's not a business meeting, but a sort of entertainment, songs and recitations and talk. This is to be the last meeting of the branch for this session, and it's sure to be pleasant. Won't you come?'

Soon Mr. Doyne came in. He was evidently genuinely glad to meet Benedict again.

'Do you remember reading Swinburne to me?' he asked. 'Some day I must get you to read me some more of him. I came across that volume of his since then, and have it for my own now.'

'He seems to have been a revolutionary in the days when he wrote that book,' said the priest. 'It's just the sort of thing that I should imagine suits you, Paudraig. You know, Mr. Kavanagh, Doyne is a great man for democracy; he has wonderful theories about an international, cosmopolitan democracy. I often tell him he's not a real Nationalist at all.'

'Well, no one will ever say that of you, Father Lawrence. You'd hardly believe it, Kavanagh, but that priest there before you is a regular rebel at heart. He'd shoulder a pike to-morrow if he got the chance.'

'Don't believe him,' said the priest. 'The fact is, I've no politics worth calling politics at all. I want all sorts of things for Ireland which don't come into the programme of any party at present. But we mustn't start talking on these subjects. If we do we shan't get to our meeting to-night. It's fully time we were there now.'

Between forty and fifty people were assembled in the room when Doyne and his party arrived. Benedict was struck at once with the fact that nearly all of them, men and women alike, were young. It seemed to him that Father O'Meara and Mr. Doyne were, with one or two exceptions, the oldest persons present, and he didn't think that either of them was thirty-five years of age. For a while Benedict had an opportunity of observing the scene without interruption. Most of those present came round Father O'Meara,

They wrung his hand, and spoke words of welcome in Irish; phrases that would have sounded ridiculously inflated and extravagant if translated, but which were the natural expressions of warm feeling in the tongue to which they belonged. To each Father O'Meara spoke some words of reply. A smile, eloquent of pleasure, simple and unalloyed like a child's pleasure, returned again and again to his lips. Mr. Doyne stood by smiling also. It was he who had brought the priest there. He was the author of all the delight. Afterwards Benedict learned that several of those who greeted Father O'Meara were Protestants. Two young girls, who sang together later on, were the daughters of a Presbyterian farmer in County Down. They of all seemed most pleased to meet the priest, and Father O'Meara spoke to them words which Benedict could not understand, but which brought dancing joy into the girls' eyes. It was wonderful that such fellowship could exist anywhere between persons whose creeds were as far asunder as the poles, most wonderful when it existed in Ireland.

But Benedict was not left standing by himself for very long. A young man, fair-haired, and with frank blue eyes, came up to him with outstretched hand. He spoke in Irish, and Benedict understood no more than the first few words.

'A hundred thousand welcomes to you.'

'I do not understand you.' Benedict shook his head sadly.

The language was changed at once to English.

'Oh, but you soon will. I was only saying that we are glad to see you with us to-night. Anyone who comes with Father O'Meara and Paudraig Doyne is welcome here. Come, and I will find a seat for you. Soon our songs and recitations will begin.'

He placed Benedict next a lady who sat near the platform and had a little girl beside her. She also began to speak to him in Irish, and once more he had to make his humiliating confession of ignorance.

'Do you know,' she said, 'I am quite glad to hear

you say that? You are giving me an excellent excuse for talking the Beurla, and I'm not at all good at the Irish myself. I'm only a learner, and I'm afraid I'm very stupid over it. I sometimes think that people like you and me are not much use to the Gaelic League because we'll never learn the language properly. But we must do what we can in other ways. My little niece here is a great dancer. She's going to dance to-night. And I work away as well as I can at the industrial side of the movement.'

'Tell me about that.'

But then the young man who had spoken to him first took his place on the platform and began to sing. Benedict did not understand what the song was about, nor had he ever heard the tune before or any other like it. It impressed him at first as full of melancholy. It was a kind of dirge with unexpected wails breaking into the melody. Then, when it was repeated for the second verse, he discovered something more. What he had taken for wailing was really the expression of great hope, of hope so great that its fulfilment was utterly remote, beyond hope, and yet the emotion of the song was hope still. A third verse followed, and Benedict felt that eyes in his soul had been opened and he saw. He stood on high ground and there was beneath him barren land and up against it broke the salt sea. Lean beasts went to and fro picking scanty grass. Men and women, toiling endlessly, gathered meagre harvests; piled dripping wrack on stone altars to burn as sacrifice to the spirit of desolation, and the salt breath of their deity blew green smoke, pungent, sour blankets of it, flat across the fields. He stood on high ground and over the barren land and the breaking sea he saw the sun set and the red clouds gathered round it. And there, in the light, lay quite clear the islands of the blest; no phantoms but realities, far more real than the sea-soaked land or the present toil on it. He knew that the men who made the song had seen what he saw, had seen and believed. He knew that the haggard peasants who sang the song by

their cabin firesides saw too; saw and believed and lived by their faith. The singer ceased. There was applause from every corner of the room. Benedict looked round to see who the man was who shouted loud behind him. It was Father O'Meara, and all his face was shining with a sudden light of high emotion. He had seen too; seen and believed. Benedict looked at the woman beside him, and in her eyes too caught the wonderful brightness which comes to those who see.

She began to speak to him again. She talked of buying Irish things, of jams made here and candles there, of stuffs for clothes, and boots. It was strange. The woman had seen the vision, had felt the hope, the vague great hope of mighty things to be. He knew that she had seen and felt, and yet she sat there beside him and talked of soap and candles; and her niece, a child of ten or twelve years old, fidgeted in her seat, all agog with excitement till her turn should come to dance.

There was much talking and moving to and fro. It seemed that most of those present were friends and had many things to say to one another. There was an eagerness in the way they spoke, a half-suppressed energy, a straining, like the straining of hounds with game before them who pull against the leash. It was evident that these men and women were no dreamers, soft-cushioned, limp amid delicious reveries of a scented past. They were restless, keen to be doing. To do what? To disentangle the idioms of a forgotten language as philologists? To wear clothes of yellow tweed? To dance jigs? To voyage to the islands of the blest? Do seers bring soap and candles, jam, starch, and stockings with them to Hy Brasil, or jig dance on the glittering shores?

Mr. Doyne came up to Benedict and led him away. At the end of the room sat a man older than most of those present, grey-haired, but seeming alert and active still,

'This is our President, the head of our branch. We owe a great deal to O'Murchadha.'

'They owe nothing to me, or next to nothing,' said the President. 'I sit here and look as ornamental as I can. Paudraig Doyne and a few more do all the work. I don't even deserve credit for learning Irish. I spoke it as a child, and even now it is more natural to me than English.'

Benedict sat down beside him, but for a time there was no talk between them. A girl went upon the platform and began to tell a story. It was in Irish, but evidently the greater part of the audience followed what she said without difficulty. Now and then smiles were to be seen on the faces of the listeners. Then laughter came to one or another. At last, on a sudden, everyone laughed at once. The girl paused and looked at the people before her with the merriest pleasure in her eyes until there was silence again. Then she went on telling her tale, interrupted again and again with more laughter, until, amidst a burst of joyous applause, she reached the climax of it.

Benedict was puzzled and distressed. The telling of comic stories jarred on the emotions the first song had stirred in him. One does not readily recognise the great prophet with a jest upon his lips. It was hard to feel that the genius of the Celt, which enables its children to behold far off imperishable splendours, can also give mirth and broad-mouthed, free laughter, like the laughter the old Greek poet saw in heaven and earth and sea when they were glad. Yet the incongruity which struck Benedict was not a real one. The fanatic, indeed, cannot laugh, because he is too narrowly earnest. The mystic visionary rarely laughs, for he is hypnotised by too long staring at shining things which whirl. But the child sees great things and yet laughs. For the child sees without effort, believes because the possibility of doubting has not yet come to him; and the child laughs, is never tired of laughing.

'That is a good story,' said O'Murchadha. 'I heard it years ago from an old blind fiddler down in Kerry. I remember it as well as if it was yesterday. We were gathered for a dance at a wedding in a cabin down on the shore, near the mouth of Bantry Bay. The old fellow played jigs and reels for us until we could dance no more of them. Then the woman of the house built up the fire on the hearth, and we sat round it while one or another told a story. The fiddler told that one. I never forgot it, for I laughed until my sides were sore. It is strange now to see these people here in Dublin laughing at it and to hear that girl telling it. I taught it to her myself.'

'I'm afraid I did not understand it.'

'Oh, well, you must get Father O'Meara to give you a translation of it when you go home. You came here with him this evening, I think. I suppose he is a friend of yours.'

'I can hardly call him a friend. I've only known him a couple of days, but I like him.'

'Small thanks to you for that. Why, if you only knew it, that priest is one of the finest fellows in Ireland to-day. We've more like him in the League, plenty of them, priests that aren't afraid to speak the truth and who love Ireland. But there's none that's his equal. And, mind you, there's no one can do the work for Ireland that our priests can if only they will. And some of them will. There's a fine set of young men coming out of Maynooth now, men with Father O'Meara's spirit in them.'

'I'm a Protestant myself, and——'

'Well, and if you are. I suppose you won't want to throw stones at a good thing because it is a priest that does it. We don't care, I don't care, Father O'Meara doesn't care whether you're Catholic or Protestant. He'll take your hand if you are for Ireland and a brave man and tell the truth. But there's one kind of man we won't touch, not with the end of a hay rake, and that's the man who snivels and lies when he's frightened, and bullies when he thinks he has the

big crowd on his side. But I don't think that's your kind, Mr. Kavanagh.'

'I hope not.'

'Well, I'm pretty sure of it. If you were a coward and a seoinin—that's what we call the kind of man who thinks it's the height of gentility to be pretending he's an Englishman—if that was your sort you wouldn't be coming here with Father O'Meara and Paudraig Doyne.'

There were dances and more songs in quick succession. Then someone told another story. It was some time before O'Murchadha found opportunity to talk again.

'I'm getting to be an oldish man, Mr. Kavanagh, and I've seen a good deal of Irish history, and heard more from those who saw what I didn't. My father was a grown man in the days of the young Irelanders, and he told me many a thing about Davis and O'Brien and Mitchel and the rest of them. I can remember the Fenian movement, for I was a good big boy at the time. I remember Parnell and the Land Agitation, and the Home Rule fight. I give it to you as my opinion now that every one of those movements started wrong. They didn't see that nothing's any use to the country till you've got the right kind of men in it. Let's get Irishmen first, instead of imitation Englishmen. Let's get Irishmen with self-respect enough to be proud of being Irish, proud of everything that is Irish because it's Irish; men too proud to let themselves be bullied and frightened by big talk and loud shouts. Give us men and the politics will take care of themselves.'

Benedict looked round the room when O'Murchadha ceased to speak. He saw the faces of the men and women, some of them already becoming familiar to him. He saw the young man with the fair hair who had spoken to him first, who sang the weird song which moved him almost to tears. He saw the girl with the merry eyes who told the story and made laughter. He saw Paudraig Doyne, patient and

strong. He saw the woman who had talked to him about soap and candles, gentle but with strength in her face behind the gentleness. He saw Father O'Meara. O'Murchadha watched him, and then said:

'You see. This is what the movement is doing. We are learning a language, preaching temperance, buying our own Irish goods, and because we are doing these things we are also doing something greater. We are making character.'

'And where is to be the end of it all?' said Benedict. 'What will come out of it?'

'Men,' said O'Murchadha. 'An educated democracy. Men who can think, and who will not be afraid to speak and act.'

'Yes, you said that. But what will the men do when you've got them? What will be their policy? Their demand?'

'Ah, that is the question. No one can answer it. I believe in one policy. You very likely believe in quite a different one, and Father O'Meara, there, in a third, not like either of ours. Each of us thinks he is right, thinks that the future will prove him to be right. But the man of the future, the man who has learned to think for himself and be brave—he will not follow any of us. He will see much more plainly than we do what is really best for Ireland. Perhaps he will want something like what I want, or something like what you want. I do not know. No one knows. Perhaps he will want something different from anything that we have thought of. But whatever he wants will be right. That is plain, because he is learning to think. And whatever he wants he will take. That is also obvious, because he is learning to be brave.'

CHAPTER XX

IT was ten o'clock when the entertainment was over. Both the priest and Mr. Doyne pressed Benedict to go back with them for an hour or two.

'You needn't be afraid of keeping me out of bed,' said Father O'Meara. 'I have to go back to my parish to-morrow, and I mean to make full use of to-night. A talk with Paudraig here is worth sitting up for, and I can sleep all day in the train.'

'I shall be brewing a cup of tea,' said Doyne, 'and you'll be wanting a pipe before you go to bed. You may just as well come and help to fill my rooms with smoke.'

For a while the talk was all of matters connected with the Gaelic League, and Benedict took no part in it. The priest inquired for one branch and then another, and heard of the organisation's work in Dublin and elsewhere. He gave in return news from the west, how the work prospered or failed, how one class was hostile, another indifferent, how, in spite of many disappointments, a new spirit of hope and energy was manifest in the most unlikely places. Then Doyne complained of the petty persecutions to which members of the League were subject.

'You know that we are objects of suspicion to the police; that our branches were watched, and the names of our energetic members reported to the Castle authorities.'

'Aren't those Castle people silly fools?' said Father O'Meara. 'What on earth do they think they'll gain by that kind of thing? We're not criminals.'

'They'll gain nothing. But it's irritating, and it tends to drive our people wild. The government——'

'Ah, the government! Now, look here, Doyne.'

The government of Ireland is about as rotten as it can be. It's a government by officials, what, I believe, is called a bureaucracy, tempered by bluster and intrigue. That's bad. I give in to you there. But it's just ourselves we have to blame for the existence of such a government at all.'

'I told you,' said Doyne, turning to Benedict, 'that Father O'Meara was a revolutionary. Listen to him now till he tells you how we ought to rebel.'

'You're missing my whole point,' said the priest. 'I'm not talking about rebellion at all. I'm saying that it's childish to go on laying all the blame for everything that's wrong in Ireland on the government. Let's see what's wrong with ourselves first, and when we've mended that we'll be in a position to ask for, and, notice what I say, to *take* whatever form of government we want.'

Benedict became very much interested in what he heard.

'Please go on,' he said.

'We're governed by officials, and, as I said, that's a bad system. But I know a good many of those officials. They come down to my parish in swarms. Carrowkeel is one of those places which are like poor Peter Peeble's plea—I suppose you never read Walter Scott, Paudraig, and yet he was a Celt like ourselves—every official must try his hand at improving it before he is properly qualified to earn his salary. They come there and they talk to me, all of them, from the Chief Secretaries down. But I find most of them honest men, who want to do what's right, and many of them have glimmerings of sense. But they can't do what's right because there's no public opinion to back them. They've got to give in to the people who bluster and the people who intrigue.'

'I don't in the least agree with you,' said Doyne. 'There's plenty of honest public opinion in Ireland, and nothing but the system of government prevents it from finding expression.'

‘ Oh yes, I don’t deny that there are honest men in plenty, and, as I said before, I know the system of government is bad, as bad as can be. But look here. A deputation waits on an official and asks him to perpetrate an egregious job in some particular locality. He knows that if he doesn’t there’ll be a row, a most infernal row. He knows it’s a job, and he does his best to modify its jobbishness, but he more or less gives in and does it. Every member of the deputation knows it’s a job too, and half of them will go privately to the official afterwards and ask him for God’s sake not to do it. These things happen, and every Irishman knows they happen. Now, who is to blame? I grant you the system of government by Boards over which the people have no control is abominable. But it might be made to work fairly decently if we only had an honest and courageous public opinion. And we have the honest men and the clear-headed men amongst us, lots of them. Why won’t they speak? ’

‘ Well,’ said Doyle, ‘ I never expected to hear you championing Dublin Castle.’

‘ I’m not championing Dublin Castle. I loathe the whole thing. I want to see Irishmen taking their own country in hand, and running it for themselves. I believe they’d do it well in the end. But the first thing we’ve got to learn is to say openly in public what every one of us is ready to say in private under seal of secrecy. If we learned that lesson, we’d have the ball at our feet. We could have any system of government we liked in the inside of a year.’

Benedict listened in amazement. It struck him suddenly that the priest’s doctrines were essentially those preached by Canon Hamilton to his Orangemen. Father O’Meara, indeed, hinted at things, ultimate issues, which Canon Hamilton would have held abominable. He suspected that at heart the priest was a revolutionary. But the fundamentals of his policy were exactly those which Canon Hamilton insisted on, truth and honesty. Also he had heard something

similar from O'Murchadha at the Gaelic League meeting. 'Give us men,' he said, 'and the politics will take care of themselves.'

'You're too hard on us,' said Doyne. 'Look at those people we were with this evening. Do you mean to say they were liars and cowards?'

'God forbid that I should think such a thing for a moment,' said the priest. 'I know they are not. And it's with them and the likes of them that the future lies.'

'But come now,' he added after a pause, 'we mustn't be talking politics all evening. I'm sure it's all deadly uninteresting to Mr. Kavanagh.'

'It is not,' said Benedict. 'Only it's all very new to me. I was brought up in the North, and I'm afraid I've been rather indifferent about Irish questions. I used to hear a lot of Orange politics when I was a boy, and since then I've dropped the whole thing. It didn't seem to matter much to me.'

'But it ought to have mattered,' said the priest. 'How can you be an Irishman and say that your country's affairs don't matter to you?'

'I don't know. Even before I left Dunbeg I didn't really care about anything very much except amusing myself. Afterwards, in Dublin, I found pleasure in things—well, in things that were not fine or great.' I ceased almost altogether to care about anything else.'

Afterwards it seemed strange to Benedict that he should have made this confession to a man he hardly knew. At the time, with Father O'Meara's eyes on him, it seemed quite natural to speak thus, simply and openly.

'And now?' said the priest. 'Are you still indifferent? Do you still care only about the things which you say are neither fine nor good?'

'No. It's different now. I have been at the funeral of a good man, a man who really lived a life for God, though I dare say you would not think so.'

'Why not?'

'Well, for one thing, he was a Protestant clergyman.'

The priest smiled gently.

'You have indeed a low opinion of us, Mr. Kavanagh, if you think that we cannot recognise goodness in the clergy of your Church.'

'Ah, but Canon Hamilton was a very violent Protestant. He was an Orangeman, the head of all the Orange lodges in his neighbourhood.'

'And therefore you will not allow me to call him good! But it happens that I know something of Canon Hamilton besides what you tell me. He was a sincere and upright man, who did steadily and without fear what he believed to be right. Is that what you meant by calling him good? If it is, I agree with you.'

'Yes, that. But more too. He was a man who was near to God.'

'I am sure of it. And, because you understand that, now that he is dead and gone, you yourself have come to think of better things and to want to lead a life like his.'

'That is what I feel. But not exactly. I cannot be like Canon Hamilton. There is also my father.'

'Who is your father?'

'He is dead. He was Benedict Kavanagh. You may have heard of him. He was one of Parnell's followers in the old days.'

'I know. I remember hearing something of his story.'

'Well, I am his son, and so I cannot be like Canon Hamilton.'

'I don't see what you mean?'

'I am not sure that I can explain it to you. Perhaps I have no very clear idea of what I mean myself. I have felt a great deal in the last two or three days, and I have not got my mind set in order. Everything is in a sort of confused state. I think I really do not mean anything that I could explain.'

'Try, and I shall try to understand.'

'Well, you see, Canon Hamilton was an Orangeman and a loyalist, and he was all for his own side. My father was on the other side. I see that Canon Hamilton was a good man—you say so too—and yet I know that my father had great things in his mind and worked for great purposes. Don't you see how I am puzzled? They cannot both be right. Which am I to follow?'

'Why follow either of them?' said Doyne. 'Why not——'

But the priest held up his hand and stopped him. 'Do you know what Paudraig was going to say? He wants you to join the Gaelic League and neither follow Canon Hamilton nor your father. But let us think a little first. Men are not great and good because they are on this side or on that in politics. There are, no doubt, good men on both sides, though they find it very hard to recognise each other. To be sincere and unselfish is the great thing. You can certainly be sincere and unselfish as a Protestant, though I believe in my heart that in refusing the Catholic faith you miss much that might help you. As an Orangeman you may be sincere and unselfish. But you may also have these virtues as a Nationalist and a Catholic. Even a priest, though I suppose you won't believe this, may be sincere and unselfish.'

'Yes, yes, of course. I know all that. But what am I to be sincere and unselfish about? What party am I to fight for?'

'Need you fight for any party? Need you fight any battle except the great one against evil?'

It seemed to Benedict that this man to whom he had spoken so freely out of his heart was failing him. He grew impatient of platitudes. Of course, there might be good men on both sides. Anyone might say such a thing and no contradiction be possible. But it was merely silly to ask whether a man need fight for any party. Canon Hamilton had been a fighter on the side of one party. Benedict Kavanagh had been a fighter for another party.

The inspiration of each life had been an idea, a creed round which men had gathered into a party for which it had been worth while to fight. Therein lay the greatness of their lives. They had not feared to fight or grown weary with the toil of it. And now this priest said to him: 'Need you fight for any party?'

'I have no doubt,' said Father O'Meara, 'that in the past the prime necessity for each side was to fight. I think that each side had something good to fight for, some principle. Even now, Paudraig Doyne will tell you, there is a great deal of fighting to be done. And he will take his share in it. Perhaps I shall too. But need we fight for parties? Our country wants other men besides such fighters. She needs some who will live, just live fearlessly, trying to help on what is good, and never lend themselves to shams of any kind.'

The priest was silent for a minute or two. Benedict did not wish to speak. He was less sure now that he was listening to commonplaces, trite phrases of a conventional moralist. It was true that he had heard the same things before. He supposed that he had read some such things on the headlines of copy-books when he wrote copies at school. Only now, as Father O'Meara uttered the maxims, there came into them spirit and life. There was silence in the room. Then suddenly Doyne knocked the bowl of his pipe against the bars of the fire-grate. Benedict roused himself to speak.

'Mr. O'Murchadha said to me this evening that the Gaelic League was making character. Did he mean that it was creating men and women such as you describe?'

'He did,' said Mr. Doyne. 'It is the great excellence of the League that by creating a genuinely Irish atmosphere it enables Irish character to exist and grow.'

'That is quite true,' said Father O'Meara. 'The Gaelic League is doing this great thing. Go where

you like in Ireland. Take any branch of the organisation anywhere. Take the poorest one in the remotest place, and you'll find in it men of the kind I mean—men who are learning to be fearless and who will not lie. It is a hard lesson to learn. It ought to be easier for you Protestants than it is for us; for we have been bullied in the past, and we are despised still. Centuries of subjection have set their mark upon our people. For longer than our fathers' fathers or their fathers can remember we have been treated as an inferior race. Is it any wonder that we do not rise at one flight to the virtues of free men? But we are rising.'

Again there was silence. It was Father O'Meara who broke it.

'But you must not think, Paudraig, and you, Mr. Kavanagh, must not suppose that we think, that it is only in the Gaelic League that such character exists. There are many men of the kind Ireland wants among your Protestant aristocracy. But for the most part these seem to be sore at the loss of their power and privileges. They do not see yet, but after a while I am sure that the best of them will come to see, that they can have a far better kind of influence if only they will show themselves to be Irishmen. Instead of a precarious and hateful sort of privilege that depended ultimately on the bayonets of a foreign people who have not even been faithful to their own allies here, our gentry, by proclaiming themselves Irishmen, can only become leaders of thought and action. They will then have a power which cannot be taken from them because it will be—how is it that the English poet expresses the thought?—broadbased upon the people's will.'" And there are brave and honest men in your northern Protestant democracy. The people Canon Hamilton lived for and taught. Only—and this is one of the saddest things we have to face—they do not yet care for Ireland, and they distrust us utterly.'

'That,' said Benedict, 'is the real point. We

dread your Church. We do not trust your laity because we believe that at the last resort the power of your priests will be supreme.'

'And yet,' said Mr. Doyne, 'you go on trusting Englishmen. You have no proof—no absolute proof whatever your suspicions may be—that we will bully you. But you do know—every year that has passed has demonstrated the fact—that the English will betray you whenever it happens to be convenient.'

'Don't look at the matter that way,' said the priest. 'Think rather that you are Irishmen just as we are, just as much interested as we are in the welfare of the country.'

'But our distrust of the priests of your Church is very deep-rooted. And you must admit that things have happened and do happen in Ireland which give a ground for our fears.'

'I wish,' said Father O'Meara, 'that you knew us better.'

'I wish,' said Doyne, 'that you knew yourselves better. How is it that you don't see that neither we nor our priests could bully you even if we wanted to? You Protestants make up one fourth part of the population of Ireland. No injustice could be done to so powerful a minority in a country which was governing itself. The best security you can have for your freedom is your own strength. And you people who are always boasting of your courage and independence ought to recognise that you would not be an easy people to persecute.'

'I wish,' said Father O'Meara again, 'that you knew us better. There are among our Catholic people many, very many, who are deeply in love with freedom; who are honest and brave as any men in the world. At present, except where the Gaelic League has organised them, they are isolated. Some of them were driven out of public life at the time of the great split in the parliamentary party. Since then they have stood apart, losing hope, brooding, and have watched the management of affairs in their

districts pass into the hands of baser men, creatures who boast and bully and lie and are drunken. And among our priests there are brave, honest men. I know many, and I have high hopes of them. You Protestants know most about another kind of priest, because your papers seize on every wrong thing a priest does and blazon it; and your people repeat and gloat over every act of tyranny. But we are not what you imagine—not all nor even, I believe, most of us. Only no papers print the good things we do, because the men who do them are not the kind of men who court publicity. And your people, though I am sure they must know of the good as well as the bad, give us only grudging praise. After all—— But there, I must not be praising my own order. But think, Mr. Kavanagh—think of all the good men, the brave and honest men there are in Ireland, Catholic and Protestant, gentle and simple, clergy and laymen. Think if we could all of us get together, see each other's faces, know each other. We need not agree about any policy. We need only just say, all of us, that Ireland is not to be filled with lies and shams any more; that no Irishman is to be bullied for speaking out the thing that is in his heart. Why, there would be enough of us to——’

He stopped suddenly, and turned to Doyne with a smile, half pathetic, half humorous, on his lips.

‘Paudraig, *a chara*, why will you let me be talking like this? Don't you know that I'm too fond of *raiméis*? Talking big is worse for a man's soul than the drink itself. Why didn't you stop me in time?’

‘Please go on,’ said Benedict.

‘I will not go on.’

‘Oh, but you must,’ said Benedict. ‘You cannot leave me with only half your say said. There must be more. Ireland wants courage and honesty. What else?’

‘Her own language,’ said Doyne. ‘Her own literature. Her individuality among the nations.’

‘Yes,’ said the priest—‘that is to say, education

along national lines, along the only possible lines. For you can no more educate a people into alien ways than you can teach cats to set game for you. But education is worse than politics for wasting time. Don't let us get started on schools and universities at this time of night.'

'Courage, honesty, and education,' said Benedict. He was set on formulating clearly the things he gathered from the priest's talk.

'That's a badly-assorted list,' said Father O'Meara. 'If you begin with courage and honesty, you must finish up with another abstraction—not education itself, but the result of it.'

'And that?'

'I suppose that we may say that capacity for straight thinking is the result of education. The uneducated man is the slave of phrases and words. He does not think far enough to get at realities. The educated man won't be headed off by threatening party cries and worn-out watchwords. He is able to go straight through them to the things they stand for, or once stood for. That is why education is one of the things Ireland needs most. For we must learn to think straight, or there can be no future before us at all. And now I'm going to bed. I must get an hour or two of sleep. But I hope I shall see you again, Mr. Kavanagh. Do you ever go down to the west? If you do, you must come and pay me a visit. I'll give you a bit of dinner and a pipe of tobacco after it. Then we'll go down to the seashore, just the two of us, and you shall say poetry to me, and I'll talk grand and big about Ireland to you, and there'll be no one to listen to us and say what fools we are except just an odd lobster or maybe a fish. Oh, we'll have a great time.'

CHAPTER XXI

ON Sunday morning Benedict received a letter from Charles Beauford.

‘I hope you have not forgotten your promise to pay a visit to my mother on Sunday afternoon. She writes to me that you may call at any time after four o’clock that suits you. You will find her a very old lady, and very infirm. Indeed, she is not now able to move about, and has to be wheeled in an invalid’s chair. She intends to tell you the story of your mother and the relationship in which you stand to us. In spite of her bodily weakness, my mother’s mind is perfectly clear, and whatever she tells you may be relied on. I mention this because I know that she means to make some provision for your future. Whatever she decides will be carried out.

‘Will you dine here on Wednesday evening next at seven o’clock? You will meet my wife and sister, but no one else. I am anxious to have a chat with you after you have seen my mother.

‘Can you believe it? That parson at Killard came in on me again after you left. He wanted me to go back to his house for supper. I’ve no doubt he had killed a fatted calf for the occasion. But—and I like a good meal as well as any man—I preferred baps, cold meat, and solitude. Isn’t there a verse in the Book of Proverbs about a dinner of herbs in a corner being better than a continuous dropping on a very rainy day? Perhaps I’ve got it mixed. But I shall never listen to a continuous dropping again without thinking of that parson.’

Benedict’s curiosity was excited in the highest degree by the promise of hearing his mother’s story, and

the unsatisfying hints about his own relationship with the Beaufords. At four o'clock exactly he knocked at the door of the house in Fitzwilliam Square. A decorous and elderly maidservant led him through the hall and up two flights of stairs. The house was gloomy and silent. Thick, soft carpets and heavy curtains deadened all sound. The furniture in the hall was of old mahogany, nearly black, and shining with much polishing. On the walls hung old prints of pictures famous many years ago. There was one—it caught his attention because he had seen it before—of a railway station from which a train was about to start. The passengers' luggage was tied on the tops of the carriages, and the platform was crowded with figures typical of all grades of society. Beside this was another, obviously by the same artist, representing a scene at an English race-meeting. These were in flat, smooth gilt frames. All the way up the stairs pictures similarly framed were hung. Benedict was conscious that they, with the dark furniture, thick carpets, and staid maidservant, harmonised in producing an impression on his mind. He moved through the stale atmosphere of a life lived fifty years before, was among ideals and ways of thought old enough to be incomprehensible to a hurried world; not old enough to be sanctified by the reflections of pious historians.

The maid opened a door which faced her at the top of the stairs, and led him into a large room lit by two lofty windows. Again a thick carpet was under his feet, and again prints which matched the others faced him from the walls. A large mahogany table stood in the middle of the room, and on it small statuettes under glass shades. On the chimneypiece was a clock with wonderfully elaborate works exposed to view. It also was under a glass shade. Opposite the further of the two windows large folding-doors opened into another smaller room. Here the maidservant paused and announced Benedict.

‘Mr. Kavanagh, my lady.’

Benedict saw, seated in a low chair, a very old lady. Her shoulders were draped with a fleecy white shawl, and her feet wrapped in a thin rug of coloured silk. Although the day was warm, a fire burned brightly in the grate. A little snow-white hair was to be seen beneath the cap which the old lady wore. Her face was very pale and thin, but her eyes were bright. Benedict came forward and took her hand. He noticed that she wore costly rings.

‘Will you sit down for a few minutes?’ she said. ‘Miss Edwards will finish the chapter. I always like to have the Psalms and lessons read to me on Sunday afternoons. I would not like to stop reading in the middle of a chapter. Afterwards, when she has finished, we can talk.’

Miss Edwards, a young woman about whom Benedict noticed nothing except that she was dressed from head to foot in black, sat at the opposite side of the fireplace, with a small table in front of her. On it were a Prayer Book and a large Bible, which lay open. She began to read at the verse which Benedict’s entrance had interrupted. Old Lady Beauford closed her eyes.

‘Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.’

Benedict knew the chapter well. He had read it often, attracted by the fierce poetry of the blood-thirsty prophetess. He wondered why the old lady before him chose to have such a chapter read to her. What could she, for whom life’s battles and life’s passions were all past, find to comfort her in the triumph ode of an Amazon? Then he remembered that she had called it the lesson. So it might be—the lesson appointed to be read that Sunday in church. Therefore she read it, or had it read to her, regardless of its subject or its fitness to her position. It was a chapter of the Bible—a chapter indicated for use on that particular day by the Church’s calendar. All chapters of the Bible were equally the Word of God.

Not one was less than that. Not one could be anything more. Just in this way Canon Hamilton read his Bible, and so regarded it.

Miss Edwards read on in quiet, unimpassioned tones, but Benedict was stirred, as he always had been stirred since he first remembered reading them, by the words about the horses prancing and their broken hoofs.

'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.'

He listened to the girl's even, gentle tones. He watched the refined and spiritual face of the old lady in the chair before him. Both were entirely serene. What did they understand of this ecstasy of triumph over a fallen foe? He understood it, and could feel it. He remembered the poem which his father had cherished. He also could have understood it. Canon Hamilton might have understood it. He could beat a clenched fist on the table before him, and shout 'No pope, no priest, no surrender!' to a cheering crowd. Mr. Doyne would understand it. Father O'Meara—he thought that Father O'Meara would try not to understand it. But these two women! The one a girl in garments of deep mourning, with a passionless voice; the other an old, old woman: how could they gather any meaning out of it? How could such fierceness be anything but horrible to them? It was a wonderful thing truly, this old-fashioned, simple faith of Protestantism in the Bible as the actual Word of the living God.

'And the land had rest forty years.'

'That will do, Miss Edwards. Thank you for reading so nicely for me. Afterwards we will read the second lesson, but not now.'

Miss Edwards rose, put away the books, and left the room.

'You are Benedict Kavanagh.' Lady Beauford's voice, which had been clear and firm while she spoke to Miss Edwards, was trembling now. 'Will you

come nearer to me, quite near, and let me hold your hand?'

Benedict, wondering greatly, drew his chair closer to her, and laid his hand in hers. She held it, and stroked it softly without speaking. She drew him still nearer to her until he left his chair and knelt down beside her. It did not strike him at the time that there was anything fantastic or strange in such an attitude. Then one of her hands was laid on his head and moved softly over his hair. Still she did not speak. Very gently she drew his face down until it was near her own. Then she kissed him on the cheek.

'You have Mary's hair,' she said; 'but your eyes are not Mary's in shape and colour. Only there is the same sort of expression in them. I remember that you were like Mary as a little boy when you sat on my lap in this room many years ago.'

Benedict found nothing to say in answer to her. He could make no guess at the meaning of her words.

'Your mother was my daughter, my only daughter. I loved her very dearly, as you can understand. I did my best to teach her to be a good woman, and I wanted her to love me. Perhaps I treated her wrongly, foolishly. I never altogether understood her, and I think she regarded me as dull and narrow in many ways. But I always loved her. I loved her all the more because there came to be a separation between my thoughts and hers. Then she married. I suppose that was the great mistake of her life, for she did not love her husband. He was many years older than she was, and he was not a good man. He was rich. I suppose that attracted her. He lived a kind of life very different from mine—a life in which many things which I count wrong were done daily as a matter of course. I fear that the prospect of such a life attracted her. But her husband was no companion or friend for her. She was a clever girl, very clever, so they used to tell me. Her husband was coarse and stupid. He wearied her. Afterwards, I

think, he was also brutal, and he disgusted her. Then she met your father. I am told—I never saw him or spoke to him—I am told that he was a brilliant man. For his sake she left her husband, her home, her honour. I would have taken her back to me, sheltered her and loved her, but she never wrote to me. I did not know where she was. Your father disappeared from public life, and we do not know where they lived. When you were born she died. But I did not know this. I did not hear of your birth for years afterwards.'

As Benedict listened tears gathered in his eyes. The story did not at first affect him as having any relation to himself. It was not of his mother that he thought; but of the girl who had made such shipwreck of her life. With swift sympathy he understood her story. The desire to escape from restraint and the dull hamperings of staid, good living had been in her heart. He understood, because he was himself instinctively a rebel. The disillusion following the taste of coarser pleasures had come to her as to him. He guessed also how it was possible for a woman, such as his mother must have been, to surrender everything in obedience to the fascination of his father's intellect and strength of will. He drew back from Lady Beauford and took his hand from hers, though she tried to hold it. He felt that the blame for the tragedy rested on her. It was her narrow code, her inability to understand, her confusion of respectability with goodness, which were in the last resort responsible for his mother's sin and shame. Lady Beauford read his feeling when he shrank from her.

'You blame me,' she said. 'But you do not blame me so bitterly as I blame myself. Only it is hard to know where I was wrong. God gave me a child to train and lead to Him. I lost her, although I would have given my life willingly to keep her safe. I tried to guide her to the green pastures and the still waters, into ways of pleasantness and paths of

peace. Instead, she went into the wilderness. And yet, going over it all, from the days when I first taught her to say her prayers—going over it all from the very beginning till the shadow came between us, and we went apart, I do not see where I was wrong.’

Benedict bent over her and kissed her hand. Then he took it in his and held it.

‘I shall not blame you,’ he said softly. ‘You loved her. Is there any more that we can do for one another, any of us?’

‘Afterwards,’ Lady Beauford went on, ‘when your father died and you were brought to me, I wanted to bring you up here as my grandchild. But Charles, my son, thought that I could not do that. There were things to be considered, the revival of the old scandal and the effect on his position. Canon Hamilton took you. There was no one in the world I would so readily have trusted you to as to him. I did not see you. Of late years, since he was a man, I have thought it wise to be guided by Charles, and he said it was better that you should not come here. But he has plans for your future. He will tell them to you himself. You must remember that Charles wishes to do all he can for you, both for my sake, and because you are, in a way, his nephew.’

‘Oh,’ said Benedict, ‘it’s all right about that. I have my work to do, and I can earn enough. You need not trouble about me.’

‘But we want you to have a good place in life. We want you to live as a gentleman, to move as an equal among our friends. Charles has a great deal of influence, and he means to use it on your behalf. He says that you have now had a good business training, and—but he will talk to you about all that himself. What I want to tell you is this. There is a little property of mine down in the west, in County Galway. My father bought it seventy years ago. I always intended it to be Mary’s, that is, your mother’s. It was not settled on her at the time of her marriage because both my husband and I dis-

liked the man she married. But I meant her to have it some day. Then, when I learnt about her death and found you, I made up my mind to give it to you. They tell me that it is not worth so much as it was once. I do not know exactly what it brings me in. Charles manages all these things for me. He will tell you about it.'

'But,' said Benedict, 'I can't—I oughtn't to——'

'Please think that it is justly and properly yours. It ought to have been your mother's, and so in time it would have become yours. I have no doubt she would have wished you to have it. What else could she wish, for you were her only child? There is a small house on the property, a shooting lodge. Long ago I went there sometimes with my husband. Lately Charles has spent a week or two there from time to time. There is very good fishing. Of course, you will not live there. You will have your work to do. But you may like to go sometimes for a holiday. Now we need not talk any more about that. Charles has the papers and deeds ready. I think I have signed all he wants me to sign.'

Lady Beauford leaned back and closed her eyes. Benedict feared that she was exhausted with the effort of talking to him for so long. He wished that Miss Edwards or the maid would come into the room. He even thought of rising and ringing the bell, but his hand was in Lady Beauford's, and when he stirred, he felt her grasp tighten. At last she spoke to him again:

'I said that we wished you to live as a gentleman, I wish more than that, I wish you to be a gentleman. You know, because my dear friend Canon Hamilton brought you up, what it means to be a gentleman—always to speak the truth and to be brave, always to be ready to help others.'

Benedict was struck by the wonderful way in which this identical ideal of life was presented to him, urged upon him from so many different directions. Going through the streets of Killard and listening

to the men who spoke to him of Canon Hamilton, he had realised the greatness of it. Then O'Murchadha, the Gaelic Leaguer, had spoken of this same ideal. And Father O'Meara said that Ireland was to be made great by way of it. Now this old, white-haired Lady Beauford, who found comfort in such strange chapters of the Bible, also told him to speak the truth and be brave. To Canon Hamilton honesty and courage were the virtues of the sincere Protestant; to O'Murchadha and Father O'Meara they were necessary to the good Irishman. Lady Beauford thought of them as the marks of a gentleman. He found himself led into a strange way of thought. If the northern Protestants, democrats at heart, if the Gaelic Leaguers and priests like Father O'Meara, if the gentlemen of Ireland were all of them devoted to this same ideal, if all of them wanted to speak the truth and be brave, would they, could they, long remain apart and estranged from each other?

Lady Beauford interrupted his thoughts by speaking again.

'But there is something else better still. I wish and hope that you will be a gentleman. I pray, and for many years past have prayed daily, that you should be a Christian. This also was Canon Hamilton's prayer. You know how good a man, how upright and brave he was. And he had Christ for his familiar friend. Believe me, He is the one Friend worth having in the world.'

Benedict believed that what she said was literally true. The shallow scepticism in which he had taken a pride the week before dropped away from him utterly. He felt that it would be wholly impossible for him now to mock and scoff as he had mocked once. But he had not got Christ for his friend. What Lady Beauford spoke of, what Canon Hamilton had certainly enjoyed, this friendship with an unseen Person, was beyond the range of his experience. Yet he believed it to be supremely desirable. For a moment he thought of asking Lady Beauford the

question of his heart—‘Where shall I find Him?’ But she was evidently very tired. Her eyes were closed again, and her clasp of his hand relaxed. He sat silent, fearing to put fresh strain upon her. He rose to his feet.

‘I think, Lady Beauford, that I had better say good-bye to you now. I cannot thank you for all you have done for me, or for what you have said to me.’

‘There is nothing to thank me for. Stoop down and kiss me before you go. Now, good-bye, and may God bless you and keep you.’

For a long time after leaving Lady Beauford, Benedict walked quickly through the streets. He took no heed of the direction in which he went, of his passings out of hot sunshine into shade, of the dust or the whirling noise of the electric cars which passed him. He did not see the laughing groups of young men and girls who went noisily, enjoying their weekly holiday. He left the streets and walked on between the high yellow walls which bound the roads of Dublin’s southern suburbs. He turned now to the right, now to the left, but still tramped steadily on, always between walls. His mind was too full of hurrying thoughts for him to notice or care about his surroundings.

There were many things which excited him. The outline of the story of his mother’s life brought him near to tears. The news of his own good fortune, of the property that was to be his, stirred expectation and hope. He felt that Lady Beauford’s gift made him a free man, loosed him from the bondage of uncongenial work and cramping poverty. Without knowing how great the gift might be, he made up his mind that at least it would enable him to live his life according to his own pattern of how a man should live. And how was he to live? His father had lived one life, a life that was good because it was lit by a passion. Canon Hamilton had lived another life, good too, steady, held firm by principle. Father

O'Meara led, as he believed, another life still; a life like his father's for the passion that was in it, like Canon Hamilton's in its clean strength, but in some ways unlike both. Lady Beauford wanted him to be a gentleman and a Christian.

He walked on and on, thinking, puzzling. Gradually his thoughts took shape and order. He saw that there were two ideals. He might choose one and make for it. He might reject both. There was the life of the patriot, the life of the other, older Benedict Kavanagh; a fierce life, with burning love and burning hate in it; a life full of consuming bitterness and rare ecstasies of exultation; a life in which a man might now and then sing the song of Deborah the prophetess, praising the Jael who should drive a nail through some tyrant's skull. But there was the other way, by which a man comes to enjoy the familiar friendship of Jesus Christ, and walk along paths, narrow perhaps and rough, but good to go upon because the wayfarer need never loose the hand of his Friend. It seemed to Benedict that he might choose one life or the other, or he might reject both and live yet otherwise; might get many good and pleasant things; might at the same time be clean and honourable, a gentleman. This was a fair life and not ignoble; only in living it he knew that he must miss two things, the flame of triumph like Deborah's and the supreme beatitude of pressing his lips against the hand of Christ.

Then fresh bewilderment beset him. He could understand and realise the emotion of his father's life, but he could not see the way to live it. What to do, to say, to hope for the Ireland of his love? What golden thread was there to guide him through the tangled woods of strife and prejudice? The love was in him and the desire to serve, but the way of service was utterly obscure. He could also understand what the joy of the mystical friendship with Jesus might mean. But, again, the way to the attainment of it baffled him. He did not know Jesus

Christ or where to find Him or how to speak to Him.

He was still walking quickly, and still the high yellow walls were on both sides of the road, so that he could not see either the hill-tops and open spaces which lay inland, nor yet catch a glimpse of the sea. Only here and there were green branches overhanging the walls. Here and there also were iron gates, through the bars of which he saw spaces of trim gardens, green grass, and flowers. But he had no right to pass through the gates. For him there were only yellow stretches of road and yellow walls confining him to the road. There were other things in the world: trees, gardens, mountains, and the sea; but he found no way of getting to them. However quickly he walked, or however far, he only passed from one wall-enclosed road to another also bounded with walls. There was a maze of such roads, and he had no clue to it. They twisted and turned, led a little upwards or a little down, crossed each other at every sort of angle, but all of them were shut in with yellow walls.

CHAPTER XXII

CHARLES BEAUFORD'S house stands upon rising ground a few miles north of Bray, a mile, perhaps two, inland from the sea. It is possible now-a-days, when motor-cars are to be relied on, for even a busy man to live so far from the city where he works. Charles appreciated the fresh air on summer evenings, liked the wide prospect from his windows even in winter, and rejoiced in the convenient nearness of good golf links. Mrs. Beauford found even greater pleasure in the situation and surroundings of the house. She had been brought up in the country,

and during the early years of her married life felt cramped and wearied by continuous residence in one of the Dublin squares. But here were a lawn and flower-garden which she, having a cultured woman's taste for such work, could make beautiful. Here were wide spaces round about. Her eyes could roam southward to the undulating ridge of Bray Head, and beyond it to the tapering summits of the Wicklow mountains, the Big and Little Sugar Loaf of the immigrant Saxons whose hearts were in grocers' shops, the Purple Spears of the old Celtic people; or she could look northwards to where the blanket of smoke lies heavy over Dublin, and on to Howth, with its long arm stretched out to guard the bay. Above all, right before her eyes, was the sea; the troublesome Irish Sea, very calm now in the June weather, over which the darkness crept slowly from the east in the evenings.

Mrs. Beauford and her sister, Agatha Bently, sat in deep chairs on the lawn. There were books and papers beside them, but neither of them was reading. Agatha Bently lay back with half-closed eyes, apparently given over to the enjoyment of the faint breeze which came from the east and fanned the scorched land. Mrs. Beauford gazed out over the sea. Her hands were folded on her lap, her limbs were at rest, and her face still. Only the slightly parted lips and a look of wonder in her eyes suggested that her mind was at work.

'It is curious,' she said, 'to look out at that strip of sea, and think how much trouble its existence has caused.'

Agatha Bently took no notice of the remark. She had all her life been accustomed to her sister's habit of philosophising gently, and now, beyond a passing wonder that the mother of three children and the wife of the stirring Charles Beauford could continue sentimental, such sayings interested her little.

'If there were no Irish Sea,' Mrs. Beauford went on, 'if Ireland had been hooked on to England or

separated only by a strait that might have been bridged, the two peoples would have blended naturally and completely. We should have been——'

'Good gracious, my dear, don't imagine such things! Surely you don't want to be an English-woman.'

'Or if only it had been three times as broad, if Ireland had stood well out into the Atlantic, England would not have been forced in self-defence to spend men and money for centuries in holding down an unprofitable island.'

'That's worse than your last fancy,' said Agatha. 'We should have been between two stools then with a vengeance. Just imagine what it would be to live half-way to America, to have to decide every year whether it would be better to spend one's season in London or New York.'

'Ah, but think. In either case we should have been spared all the ages of strife. Either as an English province or as an independent Celtic kingdom——'

'In either case things would have been horrid. Just think for an instant of poor Charles. I see him coming now with his golf-clubs, and he'll tell us that it's time to go in and dress for dinner. Charles, come here. Your wife's imagining the most awful things. She's just said that if the sea were a little wider or a little narrower, there would be no Irish question at all. Wouldn't that be terrible? You'd have nothing left to make speeches about, and if you didn't make speeches you'd never get to be Lord Chancellor. What would become of you then?'

'If the sea were only a few feet deeper,' said Charles, 'it would just flow over four-fifths of Ireland, leaving the mountains sticking up like islands in an archipelago; and I think that would be the simplest thing of all if we are to have any alteration of the present arrangement. But, anyway, we can't start changing the level of the ocean to-night. The job is big enough to have a whole day to itself. It's

just dinner-time, and that boy may be out from town any moment.'

'Good gracious! What boy? I must run and dress.'

'Oh, I told Eva this morning that I had a boy coming out for dinner. His name is Benedict Kavanagh, and I'm thinking of recommending him to your father as private secretary.'

'Well, I hope he'll be better than the last one you sent us,' said Agatha. 'I used to have to go over all his work and put the accents on the French. The dear old dad will put a bit of French into everything he writes. I fancy he thinks it gives a look of culture to his paper. I'm sure he'd put in Latin too, only that he's forgotten all he ever learned.'

'Run, run and dress,' said Charles. 'And mind now, both of you, be nice to the boy. My mother takes the greatest interest in him, and I don't want him snubbed or made to feel uncomfortable.'

Mrs. Beauford smiled acquiescence. She was often requested to be 'nice' to the oddest people, and such demands are not to be evaded by the wives of rising politicians. And she always was nice in a quiet, passive way. No man, whatever his fad, ever obliged her to show that she was bored. The most uncouth manners did not alter the sweetness of her smile. Yet in emergencies, when really very important and quite impossible people had to be entertained, Agatha was more to be relied on than Mrs. Beauford, and Charles liked to have his sister-in-law in his house. She had a capacity for intelligent interest in every subject. It mattered nothing to her what the burning question might be, or how intensely her neighbour might glow in the heat of it. She understood in a few minutes how he felt, and said shallow things sparkingly. Men with theories about education, and other difficult matters, found her sympathetic. Men with no theories about anything, but immense influence with electors, sipped her conversation like a

stimulant, and were delighted to find themselves growing brilliant while they talked to her.

It was she who accomplished her toilet most quickly, and stood ready to greet Benedict when he arrived. Little clusters of sequins glittered and sparkled on her skirt and bodice when she moved. The scent of a red rose on her breast reached him as he took her hand.

‘Of course, my sister or my brother-in-law ought to be here to introduce us, but you see they’re not. You can’t imagine what unpunctual people they are. He goes out to play golf after tea, and then—— But you know what golf is.’

Benedict did know in so far as he could have described in general terms the objects of the game. He did not know anything of the peculiar fascination which induces forgetfulness of the passage of time.

‘I’m afraid I don’t play golf,’ he said.

‘How charming of you! It’s boring, isn’t it, the way everybody plays golf? Let’s agree that we won’t talk golf to-night at dinner. If my brother-in-law says anything about a tee, I’ll say that China tea is quite coming back into fashion; and if he mentions the word brassy, you pretend you think he’s talking about Lord Brassey. That will stop him.’

Her insinuation that Charles Beauford habitually talked about his golfing performances was grossly unfair to him; but Agatha’s conscience did not trouble her while she made it. She realised that she was being very nice to the boy, just as she had been bidden; and if Charles was sacrificed, he had no one but himself to blame. Benedict was much pleased at the establishment of this sort of understanding between him and the beautiful lady who sat opposite him. Agatha herself described the dress she wore as an old rag; but it had once been, even in her eyes, very fine, and though now perhaps ragged and decrepit, it seemed to Benedict more exquisitely lovely than any garment he had ever seen. The thin gold chain and delicately shaped ornament which

hung from it made more wonderful the fairness of her neck and shoulders. The suggestion of intimacy in the way she bent forward to speak to him, and the dancing brightness of her eyes, charmed him. She seemed all graciousness, brilliance, and beauty. He did not notice that when she turned her head to see Charles enter the room there were scored beneath her ear and jaw the long, deep lines which mark on a woman the near approach of middle age.

The dining—it was such as is commonplace to some hundreds of people even in Ireland—seemed to Benedict luxurious and very delightful. He was not greatly interested in the food and wine, or conscious of getting much pleasure from them. But the soft stepping of the servants, the shining silver dishes which they brought him, the accurately balanced forks, the knives with smooth ivory handles, the gay flowers in green glass vases, the exceeding whiteness of the cloth reflecting the light of shaded candles, the whispered rustling of leaves which came from the garden through the window behind him—these things fascinated, hypnotised him. The talk around him, in which at first he took no part at all, danced and leaped from subject to subject, and point to point. Great names were mentioned familiarly. Stories were told of the intimate sayings and doings of men and women whom the common people view from afar off or read about in the newspapers. Yet evidently the great names were not dragged in for the sake of display. The stories were told because they were full of wit, not because they were about grand people. Charles Beauford himself added other stories about quite a different class, racy narratives illustrating the way Irish local politics are carried on, and the quaintly ridiculous performances of Boards of Guardians in remote places. Benedict ventured to contribute an account of an incident which he remembered in Dunbeg. It was new to his hearers, and glad laughter rewarded him.

‘Ireland,’ said Agatha Bently, ‘is certainly the

funniest place in the world. Is there anywhere else where men could do such things and not be laughed out of the country?’

‘It’s certainly odd,’ said Charles Beauford, ‘that we should have a reputation for possessing a sense of humour. If we really could appreciate a joke, the whole country would be in one continuous roar of laughter.’

Benedict flushed. It did not please him to hear anyone sneer at Irishmen in this way.

‘But surely——’ he began.

‘Oh, I know,’ said Charles Beauford. ‘The individual Irishman can see a joke. It’s when you get two or three of him together that the capacity for laughter deserts him. When it comes to drawing up a resolution—blessed word that “resolution”—then—’

‘But consider,’ said Mrs. Beauford—‘consider the condition of the country, and you can’t wonder at people not laughing. Does a man laugh with a sentence of death hanging over his head?’

‘Now,’ said Agatha Bently, ‘we’re going to have a quotation from that book of poems. My sister’—she turned to Benedict—‘loves discovering minor bards. A fortnight ago she got hold of one—I don’t mean the man himself, but his book—with a perfectly impossible Irish name, and she’s for ever saying little bits out of him. There’s a poem—it’s the one she means to quote now—which begins how is it this begins? Oh yes——

“‘Is there hope in you yet? Any hope? Any hope?
Or is only sorrow in you for the land of our love?’”

‘I know it,’ said Benedict.

‘Oh, do you? Well, I hope it doesn’t affect you in the same way as it does my sister. Every time she says it she becomes a rabid Nationalist, wants to wave a green flag or murder an Englishman. I assure you she does. You owe a good deal to me, Charles, though you never acknowledge it. I persuade her back into sanity again.’

'How do you do it?' asked Charles. 'I wish I knew the receipt for getting sense into the heads of Nationalists. It would be most useful. Please tell me.'

'It's quite simple, like all really great discoveries. I make a collection of a few of those queer country papers out of which the dear dad cuts little bits of news to send over to England, so as to let them know how wicked we all are. I bring them to Eva, and read out all the resolutions I can find passed by the different Boards. When I've finished she'd rather hear "Rule Britannia" than any other poem ever written, and actually goes about the house humming the bit about never, never, never being a slave, just as if she was a full-blooded Briton herself.'

'Don't mind her,' said Mrs. Beauford to Benedict. 'It's just casting pearls before swine to quote poetry to her or Charles either. I don't know why I go on doing it. After dinner you and I will get into a corner by ourselves, and I'll show you another poem I found. Oh, it's not in that book, and I'm sure you don't know it. We'll let the other two go off and talk about newspapers and novels and vulgar things.'

'Listen to her,' said Agatha. 'And she's the greatest novel reader of the three of us. Why, only last week she was worrying us to read a new novel about a man—but I didn't read it. What was it about, Charles? You took it up to bed with you.'

'As far as I could make out,' said Charles, 'it was about a soul. There didn't appear to be any particular body attached to it. And the creature—is a soul a creature? I don't know—anyhow, the creature went wandering through dry places, immensities, and places of that kind, desperately dry places, seeking rest and finding none.'

'Go on,' said Agatha. 'You're just getting to the really interesting part. What did it do when it took up with the seven other devils more wicked than itself?'

'It didn't,' said Charles. 'I skipped on a lot to

find that out. I haven't your taste for the morbidly improper, Agatha, but I did hope for something exciting when the devils came on the scene. But what do you think? The creature, the thing, the soul, found nothing but another soul, a twin soul, sex a little uncertain, but I fancy female. The two of them went wandering about, floating, one might say, and were happy.'

'How nice!' said Agatha. 'I should love to float about with a twin soul, like Paolo and Francesca in Watts's picture. I've always admired that young couple immensely, making the best of purgatory in that way.'

'Come,' said Mrs. Beauford, rising. 'Mr. Kavanagh will think you're mad and Charles profane if you go on like that. I'm sure Charles will talk sensibly enough when you're out of the room and there's nobody for him to play up to.'

'Am I to be hauled away before I've had my cigarette?' said Agatha. 'Please, Charles, send me one out with my coffee.'

The two ladies left the room, and a few minutes afterwards the servant entered with coffee. To Benedict the serving of it was surprising and puzzling. There were large silver jugs of coffee and hot milk, a smaller one of cream, a little dish of broken sugar-candy, and a quaintly shaped bottle with a yellow liquid in it.

'Brandy?' inquired Charles Beauford; 'or do you take milk?'

Then cigarettes, fat foreign ones, were placed on the table in a silver box. Benedict lit one, and leaned back in his chair. He had dined, and an extraordinary sense of physical well-being came upon him. Charles Beauford, excusing himself on the plea of fetching some papers from his study, left the room. Benedict looked round him slowly, contentedly. He had been an hour—two hours—three hours—he had no idea how long—in Charles Beauford's house. It seemed to him that he had entered

upon a new and very delightful way of living. The appointments of the meal he had enjoyed appealed strongly to his æsthetic sense. Elsewhere and at other times he had eaten. Here for the first time in his life he had dined. For the first time he had come under the spell of the ritual of a rich man's life. He was conscious of great pleasure afforded to him by little details. The finger-bowl on the plate before him was of yellow-tinted glass. He took it in his hand and felt it, weighed it, held it up to the light, laid it aside. He passed the tips of his fingers over the tablecloth, tracing the patterns of the vine-leaves and grape-branches which were woven into it. It was wonderfully smooth, and gave a sense of thickness to his touch. He took up the small piece of satin which had lain beneath the finger-bowl, and gazed at the picture painted in the centre of it. He remembered the white hands of the man who waited at table and the quick, deft movements of the maid who assisted him. All these small things went to make up an impression, a very vivid one, of an extremely good and beautiful way of living.

The two women, Mrs. Beauford and her sister, were well placed in such surroundings. Their dresses and their jewellery gave Benedict a sense of fitness and harmony. Just so ought women to be dressed. So they ought to sit and move graciously among rich and chosen things. So ought women to talk and laugh. There was a freedom, a complete absence of pose and affectation in their manners. These were not women who had learned to behave, who tried to talk well, who desired to impress themselves upon their company. They sat, moved, spoke in ways that were easy to them because they had always lived amid such surroundings. And these, Benedict realised this, were ladies, not because they possessed certain qualities of mind or virtues, but because long intimacy with this beautiful kind of life had given them a peculiar charm, and because

they had always been with people who lived the same kind of life.

He remembered that old Lady Beauford wished him to live as a gentleman, to take his place in the sort of society in which she had lived in her day, in which Charles Beauford moved now. He understood that in some way he was to be put into such a position that he could go to and fro, in and out, with people like Mrs. Beauford and Miss Bently. He was to dine often, to dine habitually in this way. He was to talk with people who talked, not cleverly perhaps, certainly not learnedly, but in this easy, pleasant fashion. He was to laugh as they did, feel as they did, look out upon the struggle of life from the large, sunny windows of their rooms.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHARLES BEAUFORD returned with a small bundle of papers in his hand. His manner changed entirely after his wife and her sister left. He was not less friendly to Benedict, but he was serious instead of gay, and ceased to speak lightly and jestingly.

'You saw my mother,' he said, 'and heard from her what you wanted to know about your mother—my sister Mary.'

Benedict nodded.

'Then we need not talk about that. It is not a pleasant subject for me, and must be still less so for you. I only wish to say that you need have no uneasiness about—about the story of your birth being known. Except my mother and myself, no one now living knows who you are, and nobody need know.'

He paused and lit a fresh cigarette.

'My mother also told you about that small property down in County Galway.'

'Yes. I should like to speak to you about that.'

I have a difficulty about accepting it. I have a feeling that I am robbing you of what ought properly to be yours.'

'I don't think we need touch that part of the question at all. The property never was mine, and even if you did not exist it very likely never would have been mine. I know that my mother means to leave a good deal of money to various charities. I think that some society or orphanage will lose the price of what she gives to you. I shall be none the poorer. In any case the thing is my mother's, and neither you nor I have any right to interfere with her if she chooses to give it away.'

'It's kind of you to put it that way.'

'Oh no. My mother believes you have some sort of claim on her. I don't recognise the claim. Being a lawyer, I know that you have no claim. But she has a perfect right to give you whatever she chooses. Now,' he spread out one of the papers in his hand, 'here is a statement of the rental of the property, arrears, cost of collection, and so forth. You will readily understand it, and you will find that there is at present a net income of nearly two hundred and fifty pounds a year to come to you. It is not very much, not nearly enough to live on, but it's something, and it will be a considerable help to you when you obtain a suitable position. Here,' he spread out some other papers, 'are figures connected with the negotiations for the sale of the property to the tenants in which our agent has been engaged for some time. This is the final offer, made through the parish priest, who seems, so far as I can gather, to be a decent sort of man. I have worked out what the capital sum will be after the bonus has been added, and I see no reason why you should not invest the money so as to secure at least two hundred pounds a year. You will still have the house, which is really only a shooting lodge, and about eighty acres of land which we called demesne, and which is at present let to eleven months' tenants for grazing.

This you will, so to speak, sell to yourself, and you can let it again afterwards if you like.'

Benedict looked over the figures. His training in Jeffars and Digby's office enabled him to understand his position at once. He saw that he would become the possessor of an income more than double the sum he had hitherto lived on.

'May I take these papers home with me?'

'Certainly. The property is your own now. It is for you to carry through the sale or make some new arrangement, exactly as you please. And now I want to speak about another matter. You will not, I suppose, wish to continue your office work. No? I think you're right. It's dull work, and leads to nothing. But the training has probably been very valuable to you. I know no better place for obtaining a really first-rate business training than a land-agent's office. I advised your being placed with Jeffars and Digby. I thought you would do better by spending a few years with them than by going through the University. My idea always was to obtain some post for you under one or another of our various Government Boards. There are very nice, well-paid jobs to be got for a man who is fairly well qualified to do the work, and they are to be had for the asking; that is to say,' Charles smiled slightly, 'when the proper person asks. You can understand now why we kept an eye on you down in Dunbeg, and why you were shifted out of that when you mixed yourself up with the Nationalists. That was a supremely silly thing to do. You'll excuse my speaking plainly. What was it? Oh yes, the Gaelic League, I think. Just the most disreputable of all the whole set of these organisations, and the silliest.'

'You're entirely wrong,' said Benedict. 'I know several men——'

'My dear fellow, don't let us start arguing. If it makes you any happier I'll give in that all Gaelic Leaguers are angels, but the fact remains that it

won't do for you to be mixed up with them. If you want to get the sort of job I mean, if you want to belong to a decent club and live as a gentleman among gentlemen, you must admire the Gaelic League from a distance, and a very considerable distance too.'

But I assure you there's nothing, absolutely nothing, which a gentleman—in fact, the Irish gentlemen if they were wise—I mean——'

'We'd all become Gaelic Leaguers to-morrow. Well, we might. But I assure you we won't. We may be wicked or we may be fools, but either way you must take things as they are and stop bothering about how they ought to be. For instance, our Government is very nice and obliging, but it won't actually make jobs out of hand even to oblige an influential supporter like myself. We'll have to wait till something turns up. In the meanwhile I have a plan for placing you with Lord Telltown, my father-in-law, as private secretary. He's a dear old gentleman with no end of a good opinion of himself, and he's very boring at times. He runs a newspaper of his own in the interests of the Protestant religion and the Unionist party. He's got it into his head that the two things have some sort of connection with each other, that the Conservatives support Protestantism, or some notion of that sort. It's utterly silly, of course, but there it is, and, as I said, we've got to take things as we find them. Now, what do you suppose he'd think if he discovered that his private secretary was a Gaelic Leaguer, or, for the matter of that, any other sort of Leaguer? Why, he'd see you far enough before he let you inside his house.'

'Well, in that case, we'd better drop the idea of my going to him as private secretary.'

'Now, don't be in such a hurry. It's not a bad kind of job. The old gentleman has a lot of influence one way or another. He toddles over to the House of Lords, as a representative peer, you know, and makes speeches about Irish affairs. He gives

dinners, and you'd meet men of the sort it's useful to know at his house. He'd always treat you like a gentleman. You'd have very little to do. In the course of time, between his influence and mine, you'd be sure of a job, if it was only a resident magistracy. and most likely you'd get something better.'

'But—no, you must listen to me—I can't go to Lord Telltown pretending to be what I'm not. It wouldn't be honest.'

Charles Beauford smiled indulgently.

'What are you?' he asked. 'I don't suppose you know. You've got the usual vague sort of ideas of Nationalism that most young fellows seem to start with if they're any good. But just look at things as they are. Look at that Board or Council, or whatever it was, that you told us the story about this evening. Are those fellows fit to govern anything or anybody? But there's no use arguing about these things. Experience will teach you sense. In the meanwhile you've got to do something. You can't live, or, at least, you can't live as a gentleman on two hundred pounds a year. Don't be in a hurry to make up your mind. If you hit on anything better than this secretaryship with Lord Telltown, let me know, and I'll do my best to help you. But I don't believe you will. And now we've had our talk out. Let's go and find my wife and her sister. They won't be pleased if we leave them all evening to themselves.'

They passed out of the dining-room into the square hall, lit now by a lamp which hung from the ceiling. Benedict noticed that the polished wood of the floor reflected the light pleasantly, that the rugs on which he walked here and there were soft under his feet. that the air was delicately scented by a bunch of red roses which were arranged in a china bowl.

'Do you care about old coloured prints?' asked Charles. 'Here's a set of three which I picked up the other day. They are absolutely ruinous things to buy. I strongly advise you not to allow your taste

to develop in that direction for a few years, at all events.'

He lit one of the candles which stood on a writing-table in a corner of the hall, and held it up.

'Of course, you can't judge the colour by this light. Some time or other I must show you these and the others I have in my study when you are here in the daylight.'

They entered the drawing-room. Benedict, more at his ease than he had been before dinner, had a vivid sensation of pleasure. The long windows were wide open, and by the light of the summer evening he could see the trees and lawn outside. Two candles burnt near the piano, making a circle of light round Agatha Bently, who sat playing tunes out of a recently published collection of Irish music. In the far corner of the room was more light. A shaded lamp stood on a table, and near it Mrs. Beauford lay back in a deep chair with a book on her lap. Between the candles and the lamp was a broad space, half lit. The grey of the twilight from without lay over it, shot through the rays from lamp and candles. Here were tables covered with silver things which caught and reflected chance rays, or with books on them, dull, dimly outlined, and great bunches of sweet-smelling flowers.

'Come, Mr. Kavanagh, and sit down,' said Mrs. Beauford. 'Agatha is going to sing for us, and after that I shall show you the poem I was speaking about at dinner.'

'What would you like?' asked Agatha from the piano. 'Will you have a nice drawing-room song about ever and evermore and the love that never dies, or would you like some music? Here's a book of Irish songs, genuine music of the Gael, done up to suit modern ears and the piano. But no, I won't give you that. There's a weird fascination about the things. They might corrupt our Unionist principles. Mr. Kavanagh is young and impressionable, and Eva has a Nationalist poem waiting for him.'

I'll run no risks. But this is music too, and it's Gaelic—Scotch Gaelic; the nice comfortable sort of Gaelic that one can sentimentalise over without getting up to feel patriotic or absurd. Listen now, all of you.'

Benedict was caught, entranced by the melody. A phrase recurred again and again set to an extraordinarily sweet sequence of notes:

'Ho ro, Mairi dhu, turn ye to me.'

The music completed the spell which his surroundings had cast on him. Every sense had its share in the rich pleasure. There was softness and smoothness for the touch. There was scent of sweet flowers in his nostrils. His eyes wandered now to one and now to the other of the graceful, kind ladies on whom the light shone, or rested among the dimly seen, beautiful things which lay in the shadow. The strangely seductive music caressed him. He felt that it would be good to enjoy repeatedly the luxury of these things. He realised that just this kind of life had been placed within his reach. He might accept; it was only his acceptance which was needed—a place among the men and women who lived in this way, ate, talked, moved, breathed, heard thus. It was all good, wonderful, delicious, rapturous. It was to him, not to the dark Mary of the poet's imagination, that the song kept calling—

'Turn ye to me.'

He remembered with disgust the sordidness of the life he had lived before, the tawdriness and vulgarity of it all. He thought of his sudden repentance, and turned from the pain of it. The recollection of the militant energy of Father O'Meara and Mr. Doyne made him shrink, frightened, unwilling to dwell with such forces. Here was a life much higher and more beautiful than his had been; easier and far more delightful than Father O'Meara's. And it was open to him, his for the acceptance of it. Its fair things,

sweet scents, and soft fabrics, and tender melody called him, allured him.

‘Turn ye to me.’

For the last time Agatha sang the words. Then, rising, she closed the piano.

‘Now, Charles, the time has come when you and I are to talk about newspapers and novels and vulgar things, while Eva shows Mr. Kavanagh poetry-books. Come on, let’s start with a breach of promise case. You shall go and fetch an English halfpenny paper, and I’ll take an Irish one, and we’ll see which of us can find the most sickening details.’

Mrs. Beauford took an old magazine from the table beside her, and opened it.

‘This is what I wanted to show you, Mr. Kavanagh. I picked the magazine up out of a bundle of old rubbish that my father was clearing out of his library when I was at home last summer. I always have the greatest curiosity to see what is in old newspapers and periodicals. One seems to get very vivid glimpses into the lives of the people of the last generation by reading the things that didn’t survive them—the things they wrote which belonged just to them, not to all men, as the great works of each generation do. Not that this poem is either commonplace or ephemeral. I could imagine it written by one of the men who were with Thomas Davis, only it’s too late in date for the Young Ireland inspiration. It’s just forty years old. Perhaps you will be able to tell me something about it. It’s signed with your name, and Benedict Kavanagh isn’t very common. Could it have been written by some relation of yours?’

Benedict took the magazine. A single glance was sufficient to show him that this was a printed copy of the poem he had found in manuscript among his father’s papers. Here were the verses about the dead patriots and their waiting souls, and the strange resurrection of them. And it was signed ‘Benedict Kavanagh.’

‘I am sure,’ he said, ‘that it was written by my father.’

‘Oh! and is there any more? I mean, have you a volume of his poetry? I should so much like to see it.’

‘So far as I know, that poem is the only one he ever wrote.’

‘What a pity! He must have been a great man and noble. Will you tell me something about him?’ But Benedict did not answer. He was going over again the words which had moved him so violently when he first read them in the Rectory at Killard. Now, as then, they appealed to him as an imperious call to a life of endeavour, of stress, of sacrifice. He felt again, more powerfully even than before, the passionate love of Ireland which burned in his father’s verse. This is a kind of love which defies analysis or explanation. It is comparable to other loves, the child’s love for a parent, the woman’s for a man, but it is different from either. It seeks less than any other love. It requires no return of kind words or caresses. It has no point of contact with the physical. It comes more absorbingly to men of small nations, whose countries the world has learned to despise, than to those who can look back to centuries of success and splendour. It is lost altogether by peoples who achieve empire. Yet it is to be felt by rich men as well as poor. It dies swiftly when baseness and selfishness inhabit the soul along with it. It finds expression best in the sad songs of the poets of defeated peoples, and comes to its richest fruit in the deaths of gibbeted prisoners and captains in lost fights. But no defeat or manner of death, no reviling or painful hatred, can quench it or break its force. Moses felt it still though the people for whom he lived were remembering the fish they ate freely in Egypt and the cucumbers and the melons—felt it though they cursed him for the deliverance he had wrought, reckoning fleshpots more desirable than liberty. Christ felt it when He wept

over Jerusalem—felt it though He saw the priests, His priests, draw back their lips and bare their teeth in hate of Him. It was strong in Him even while the shrieks of the blinded mob rang through Pilate's judgment hall, demanding a cross for the King.

It came to Benedict again, calling him with a high, clear voice. He rose unsteadily to his feet, held his hand out to Mrs. Beauford, stammering excuses as he said good-bye. She asked him to stay longer and talk more to her. Agatha Bently rallied him, declaring that after all the poetry had put him to flight. Her eyes and smiles, her waving hand, with rings flashing on it, danced to him. Charles Beauford, taking his arm, bid him come again, reminded him of Lord Telltown, of good things in store for him, of the need of seizing passing opportunities. Benedict went away from them all. He hurried through the hall, out of the door, hearing it closed behind him, hurried across the lawn, over the fine gravel of the drive, through the gate, and stood at last drawing deep breaths on the dusty highroad.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE fishing village of Carrowkeel stands on the south shore of its own bay, and the boats from its harbour have not far to go to reach the open sea. But the bay itself stretches a long way inland from the village, bending sharply northwards, opening out at last into a wide basin. Into this no boats come, for the water is very shallow, and at low tide there is no water at all, only flat grey sand and a belt of weed-covered stones which divides the fields from the shore. Over these the water comes, and at spring tides ripples up the edges of the coarse grass. At the eastern end of this basin is a low round hill, planted with trees which do not seem to thrive, and

on the side of it a grey house. Below the house and at each side of it are broad fields bounded by stone walls, built loose without mortar. Above it are the slanting battered trees, alders, and Scotch firs. To the right and left near the shore are cabins surrounded with small fields where beasts graze, or pitiful thin meadows ripen slowly, or patches of potatoes and oats grow among stones and rocks. Further west, on the opposite side of the bay from Carrowkeel, is the ruin of a square tower, once the fortress of a line of chieftains, now the forlorn shelter of rain-soaked cattle on stormy nights. Behind this tower, and then on beneath the hill and the grey house, runs the road to Carrowkeel from the neighbouring market town. Often, when the tide is low, travellers will leave the road and cross the sand on foot, thus saving themselves a mile and more of their journey.

This piece of land was Benedict Kavanagh's property, the gift which old Lady Beauford had given him in hopes that with the rent of it, or the price of the sale of it, he might live in the world as a gentleman. The grey house was his, and the fields around it, and the scanty woods and the cabins where the poor people lived, and the old tower round which legends had grown, whose stark walls men, remembering tales of blood, avoided of dark nights.

Here he came a week after his dinner at Charles Beauford's house. He came to see what was now his, to decide what to do with it. So he said, explaining his journey to Mr. Jeffars. But in his heart he knew he had really come in order to see Father O'Meara. He wanted to explore, to learn about the place, the house, the people. But he wanted much more, he wanted passionately, to find an answer to the question which beat day and night in his brain—'What am I to do to serve Ireland?' He was driven to seek his answer from this priest. It seemed certain that no one else whom he knew could help him. Most people would not understand the question.

Others who might understand would not be able to answer it. Father O'Meara would certainly understand, and perhaps—it was but a hope after all—would show him the way he sought and how to walk on it.

In response to Benedict's note, the priest came over from Carrowkeel. He and Benedict ate a meal together in the half-dismantled dining-room of the grey house. They sat smoking for a while, and then they walked together along the road towards the tower. The tide was nearly at the end of its ebb, and the flat muddy sand stretched very grey and dull in the evening light. The sun had passed below the skyline of the hills which bent round the bay from the north, but far out, where the eyes caught one glimpse of the open sea, there lay on the water a belt of light.

'You have asked me,' said the priest, 'a very hard question—how are you to serve Ireland? Do you know that you have demanded nothing less than this, that I should order all your life for you? How can I do that? I that have found it hard enough to order my own.'

'Unless you tell me,' said Benedict, 'there is no one else who will.'

'Many men, brave men, honest and true, have sought in the past, and are seeking now just what you seek. They have made mistakes, gone wrong hopelessly, perished and left no tangible good after them, nothing but the memory of their lives. What reason have you for supposing that I can show you the way that these men failed to find?'

There came down the road towards them a man and woman riding on a horse. The man sat in front, upright, alert, a strong, handsome man. He wore a coat and trousers of thick grey tweed. The coat was flung open, and Benedict saw the rough flannel of the bawneen within. The woman behind him sat on a pad of woven straw. Her crimson petticoat fell over the horse's flank. She wore a brown shawl over her head, and carried a basket on her arm. She was

young, strong, comely, with bright gentle eyes. Drawing nearer, the man shouted an Irish greeting to the priest, and a moment afterwards the woman's voice echoed what he said. They looked Benedict straight in the face with friendly glances, and then, speaking English, bid God bless him. They passed.

'That man has a small farm near Carrowkeel,' said the priest, 'one of those which the Congested Districts Board cut out of the big Curragh farm when they bought it. He takes a turn at the fishing now and then. He has lately married, and he has got a good wife.'

'Yes,' said Benedict, 'they are a handsome pair.'

'They are coming back from the market. We shall meet more like them this evening—thank God, many more. What did you notice about them? They are poor and their clothes are coarse. Yes, and what else? The man is sober. He has not touched drink to-day, though he was in the big town, as they call it, and was buying and selling. Therefore the woman looked happy. She was not drooping nor tired, and her beauty, for all the hard work that she does, will not leave her in a year or two. And what else? Could you see their eyes? They have brave, steady eyes—the man especially. People who have such eyes have self-respect. No one has bullied them, or will, or can. Those two, the man and the woman, are not afraid of anyone. They have learned to speak the truth. Did you notice the way they sat on the horse—the alert, strong poise of the man; the grace of the woman's figure? There has been joy in their lives, singing and dancing, hurling, racing, and much laughter.'

The priest paused.

'Why are they like that? Why is that man not reeling home along the road, straightening himself as he passes me, and looking at me with furtive, lying eyes? Why is the woman not cringing to you, begging, lying, grumbling? Let me tell you. Because a man lived in Carrowkeel for forty years

as parish priest who had found out how he could serve Ireland. Father Moran was my predecessor. Men called him a fool. They despised him because, as they said, he did not know how to get on in the world. And it is quite true. He did not know that. And they despised him also because he wore shabby clothes, and because he spoke queer English, spoke with an Irish brogue and with quaint terms of expression. He wasn't enough of the gentleman for their taste. He wasn't genteel. My God! Think of the incredible degradation of the ideal of life set up by the men who called Father Moran a fool! They never thought when they sneered at his English that his own proper language was Irish; that he spoke that as heroes and kings did, as poets sang it. They saw his shabby coat, but they didn't see—it appears as if they couldn't see—that his coat didn't matter. They did not understand the real greatness of the man, how he kept the people to their Irish tongue and Irish ways; how he taught them to be sober, self-respecting, truthful. They called him a fool; but he had found out the way to serve Ireland, and he worked at the service without reward or praise. Let them call him a fool. I ask no more for myself than to be just such another fool as Father Moran.'

Benedict made no answer, and for a time Father O'Meara did not speak again. They walked together along the road, drawing nearer to the ruins of the ancient tower. Across the bay, far out towards the west, the village of Carrowkeel could be dimly seen. But now lights shot out from the windows and the open half-doors of the cottages where lamps were lit or fires blown to a blaze beneath the kettles which hung over them. Father O'Meara stretched out his arm and pointed.

'Have you good eyes? Then look out there. Do you see the three lights in a line a little to the left of the village? No. More over, up the hill from the shore. That's what we call our technical school, a very grand name for a shed with a galvanised iron

roof. If you were in there now, you'd see the boys gathering for their carpentry class. They are not being made into carpenters, given a trade, but just taught the use of tools. We want no more gaps in walls, blocked with old harrows and rotten beams. We want neat gates to swing on hinges, shelves in the houses, chairs mended, good doors for the stables. It's all part of the same work. It's the learning of self-reliance and self-respect.'

Benedict gazed across the empty bay. He saw the three lighted windows, imagined the scene within, felt hope rise in him.

'And you have done that for them,' he said—'you or Father Moran?'

'No. I have not done it for them. There you touch the great mistake which has brought to ruin so many fine-sounding schemes. Things must not be done for our people. They must learn to do things for themselves. Nothing, literally nothing, can be done from outside. Have we not had enough of that? Money poured out, wasted. Strangers coming to teach and going away disheartened. For our people there is only one hope, and that is in themselves, themselves alone. Even we, their priests, who are of the people as no other educated men are, and know them as no one else can—even we must not do things for them, must not drill and drive them.'

'But that Father Moran whom you spoke of?'

'Father Moran did not do things for them. He taught them the spirit which now makes them able to do things for themselves. I try to follow his example.'

They came to the point of the road above the old tower, climbed the wall, and went across the grass. They sat down together on some stones which lay where they had fallen from the ruin years before.

'But you have not told me,' said Benedict, 'how I am to serve Ireland. I am not a priest.'

'But Ireland wants your service too. You can do what we priests cannot do if you will.'

‘What is it?’

‘Would you be willing to live here among these people? Remember that you will have no educated men to speak to except me, if you care to count me, and one other. You will be cut off from many pleasant things and good things. You will only now and then be able to go away to hear good music, see pictures and plays. You will miss the stimulus of clever talk about great matters and exciting events. Your interests will become narrowed as time passes. You will grow to be in one way a smaller kind of man than you might have been—smaller intellectually, of less culture. Are you in a position to count the cost of such sacrifice, and having reckoned, will you make it?’

‘I am ready to make it. I think that already I have counted the cost.’

He thought of Charles Beauford, of living as a gentleman, of the delight on which he had turned his back the week before, and believed that he knew what the sacrifice asked of him meant.

‘You tell me that you intend to sell this property of yours to the tenants at once. You realise what this means for them. They become by the stroke of a pen independent men. They enter at once upon a new kind of life full of possibilities of development and success, but holding also the chance of utter failure. You understand this. But do you also realise that your responsibility towards them and towards Ireland does not cease when your sale is effected? You have not owned this property for long. It is only a few days since you accepted it as a gift, and in a few weeks more it will have ceased to be yours. But when you accepted it you accepted along with it a great responsibility, a load of duty. You do not get rid of the responsibility when you sell. The form of it is changed, but the thing itself is on you still. You cease to be a landlord over these tenants of yours. You must become instead their friend,’

‘But how can I be their friend?’

‘As their landlord such a relationship between you and them would have been impossible. The miserable history of the last thirty years forbids such a thing. There has been too much suspicion sown and too much hate has ripened. But as their neighbour, as a brother farmer—for you must learn to till the land you keep—you may in time become their friend. If you love them they will in the end love and trust you.’

Benedict sat silent, hesitating. He came to Father O’Meara as a prophet. He expected—he had not acknowledged this to himself, but now he knew that he expected to be bidden to do some great thing. And now he was asked to turn farmer, to plough fields, to talk to ignorant men about calves and bullocks, to find adventure and stirring emotion in experimenting with potatoes. Could this indeed be the service of Ireland, the fitting worship of the queen who was to be crowned, the way to win companionship with the hero souls who waited in the mountain caverns?

‘Is there no more than that?’

‘What do you want more?’ said the priest. ‘Do you not realise that Ireland’s future is in the hands of these peasants who are buying their fields? All over the country they are buying and becoming free men. In their hands for the future will be the responsibility of the conduct of public business. Their representatives will levy rates, spend money. Already the management of part of the education of the country depends on them. It is for them to start schools like that one across the bay, to find instruction for themselves and their sons in better ways of farming, to found libraries. Do you not see that for four-fifths of Ireland everything depends upon them? If they are lazy, thriftless, selfish; if they are content to give over the business of the country to the care of shallow demagogues; if they come to regard corruption and shams and lies as natural, inevitable features of public life; if they themselves refuse to think greatly, patriotically; then the final ruin of Ireland must be

something far completer and more hopeless than any of her misfortunes in the past. But if they have friends, not masters or governors, but friends, who themselves feel high things and live in the light of great hopes, who hate baseness, and will not let the canker of it eat the heart out of our public life, then our people will rise to their opportunities. Then we shall have the foundation of our nation noble, the men who drive spades into the brown earth, the women who rear babies in the cottages. If these are noble all will be well with us.'

'But will not you do this for them? What need have they of me? You spoke of Father Moran and what he did. You priests are the men who must lead the people into great, noble ways. You must keep pure our public life.'

'You want to place us in a position neither good for us nor them. We are, or ought to be, God's ambassadors to men. We are, no, but we ought to be, their teachers in the great truths of eternity. In the long struggle that is nearly past now many of us were driven, some, I fear, gladly, but some unwillingly, to take part in fierce, mundane strife. The people had no other disinterested friends. They asked us to help them. How could we refuse? But it was not good, not right. Questions are before us still, questions to be argued, fights to be fought. The dust of these conflicts ought to be kept out of the sanctuary. The hands of the priest who sacrifices should not reek with a fighter's sweat. Let God's priests stand apart a little way, to comfort and absolve, to offer the supreme sacrifice upon the altar, and to pray, always to pray. It is for you who are not a priest to go into the fields and work, into the battles and fight, into the life of politics national and local, and to see to it that the work is well done, the fight fought bravely, the life lived nobly. "Is there no more than that?" you ask. Why, the honour I offer you is so great as to be intolerable.'

'An intolerable honour! A writer in a book I

once read says he finds a sense of the intolerable honour laid upon her in the face of the Virgin as Botticelli painted her.'

'I have never read that book, or, if I have, I missed the phrase you quote. The thought is new to me. But I accept it as a parable. To you and men like you, with your fine, free training and your great traditions, to you it is given to travail in birth pangs for our people till a great nation is born, to bring forth and nurse at your breasts men, Irishmen. Will you count the intolerable honour a thing to be spurned?'

'I ask no more,' said Benedict slowly, solemnly, 'than to have my part of it.'

'I say to you again,' said the priest, 'count the cost before you venture. These are no light travail pains, nor quickly past. A friend of mine said to me once that to work for Ireland is no holiday task, and that a worker must not expect to be paid trades union wages. What you mean for good will be taken for evil. The truth you speak will be distorted into lies. You will not win cheers, or not often, but instead of them, reviling. Can you bear such things? You will find that the people you love will not always love you; that at times, often, your name will be for a hissing and a reproach to them. Can you bear that? Dare you go on speaking the truth when those who love lies curse you and the mob shrieks at you?'

Benedict sat silent. His lips were pressed together. His hands were clenched tight. The priest saw in his eyes a look that he had never seen before in any man's. But, because he was himself a brave man, he knew instinctively the meaning of it. It was the light that is in the eyes of men in extreme stress through compassing foes who yet mean to fight and win or fight and die, but who will not yield.

'But there is more than that. There are harder things still. Have you courage to rise again after you have fallen? To go back and start afresh when you have missed the path and gone astray? Have

you the indomitable persistence which will enable you to return to the work again and again after mistaken effort, after miserable failure?'

The priest ceased speaking. He heard Benedict draw quick breaths, as a man does who pants, after the strain of running at his highest speed. Then, standing up, he laid his hand on the broken wall of the tower behind them.

'Some day,' he said, 'I will tell you stories about this castle, of the men who built it and defended it, and the others who came to besiege and batter it. They were fierce men who lived in those days, men of passionate love and furious hate. God forbid that we should ever go back and do the deeds they did, the deeds of lust and blood. But they had one supreme virtue which we miss. They were brave.'

Again, as once before during the evening spent in Mr. Doyne's house in Dublin, it seemed to Benedict that the priest was not speaking to a listener, but meditating aloud.

'We have, as no other people has, our past continually before our eyes. There is not a parish without its ruin, its stone-walled castle, its fort with earthen mounds, or its round tower. Not a county but has its battle-fields to boast of, not one of our old men but will tell us stories of the heroes. And what good do we get from it all? A nation's inspiration comes out of its past, or ought to come. But where is ours? We sentimentalise. We dream. We create a Celticism such as never was in our poems and our plays. We shroud heroic figures in mists of our own imagination, and then, because they loom dim, we call them great. All the while we are missing the essential thing about them. They were brave men. Fighting for good causes or for bad, for Ireland or for themselves, at least they fought. They did not shrink from facing long odds, or despair of bringing half-lost battles to victorious ends. This is the spirit which we want. It takes no courage to bray out sounding words when the crowd is in the

humour to cheer us. But it does take courage to serve Ireland faithfully. Where are we to find it?'

CHAPTER XXV

FATHER O'MEARA left the wall of the old tower, and took his seat again on the broken masonry close beside Benedict. When he next spoke his voice had lost the note of exaltation. Its tone was as if he had left high places for some shadowed region where he walked in awe. But there was behind his words an earnestness which claimed Benedict's attention, and made him feel that the central point of all that was said, the thing of supreme importance, was reached at last.

'Do you ever read Thomas à Kempis? No? I thought perhaps you might read him. In one of the chapters of his "*De Imitatione Christi*" there are these words: "*Sine amico non potes diu vivere: et si Jesus non fuerit tibi præ omnibus amicus, eris nimis tristis et desolatus.*"'

The priest's Latin puzzled Benedict. He had learned to pronounce the language as English school-boys do. He could not follow Father O'Meara's Italian vowel sounds.

'Shall I translate it for you? "Without a friend you cannot live for very long." Indeed, without friends you cannot live for Ireland at all, even for a day. "And if you have not Jesus for your Friend——"'

Benedict started to his feet with a cry.

'Ah! I know that. Do you think I do not know that now? I heard it—I say I heard it—from the dead lips of the best man I ever knew. I heard it from a good woman. I hear it now from you. Day and night my own heart has been repeating the same thing to me. I must have Jesus for my Friend. So you all say to me. But you do not tell me this: where am I to find Him?'

‘My friend, I think I can tell you that too. At least, I can tell you where I find Him, and I am sure that you—— I find Him on the altar, Jesus Himself, present in reality beyond all possibility of doubt. You can find Him there. You can find Him in the benediction, when His body is held above you as you kneel, and from His lips—the very lips of Him Who was slain and rose again—comes the great peace, the “Peace be unto you” of Easter Day. You will find Him—I do not go beyond the literal truth when I say that you will touch Him and feel His breath on you, drawing near to Him again after short absence, when the absolution lifts off from you the burden of your sins. What I tell you is certain. I myself have tried it, and I know. I offer you one perfect way of proof. Come and see for yourself. Never mind the arguments and the subtleties and the tossings of vexed questions to and fro. The thing is simple. Come and see.’

Benedict listened with the closest attention to every word which Father O’Meara said. He paused for a while, thinking, before he answered :

‘I cannot do what you ask. I do not think that I should find Him in your way. On the contrary, I think that I should sacrifice my chance of really knowing Him. I believe perfectly what you say when you tell me that you yourself have found Him and do find Him in the way you point out to me. More than that, I believe that He is present on your altars, in your benediction and absolution—really present, not merely to be found through such things by men trained to feel as you feel. But I cannot—if you like to put it so, I will not go with you.’

‘But why? You want to find Jesus and to have Him for your Friend. You yourself have said so. Think what I offer you, access to places where He is. You yourself admit that He is in them. And more than that : I offer you the company of men who have found Him and know Him intimately. I do not mean poor mortals like myself. I mean the great

saints who are not dead or far away, but are with us still. I offer you their sympathy, their help, their prayers. I offer you communion with them; fellowship—do you understand?—with those who hungered for His friendship just as you do, and who will help you to find the satisfaction which they found. And more still: I offer you a place in the Church—His Church. You will be one of the family, of the children of the Mother—*quæ sursum est Jerusalem quæ est mater nostra*—and she will swathe you in warm garments, and plant your life round with sweet remembrances of Him, and hedge it in with holy ordinances.'

'I will not go with you,' said Benedict. 'I refuse deliberately all you offer me, and you have put my reason into words for me. I do not choose to have my life planted round and hedged in. I wish to live in the open. If I find Him, it will be in some wide place, on a hillside or by the seashore, in some place where fresh breezes are blowing. I will not breathe garden-scented air. I want room to stretch my limbs in, to be free. I will not be swaddled, nor mothered, nor caressed. I shall walk alone, holding no man's hand until I walk with Him and clasp His.'

Father O'Meara stood silent looking at Benedict. There was in his eyes an expression of great pity and deep sadness, like that which was in Christ's eyes when He looked on the young man of great possessions whom He loved. Then the expression changed suddenly, and his gaze left Benedict's face. He looked into the distance, where above the hills to the south-east the moon began to rise. His lips moved, though he spoke no word. Then they were still again. He stood with half-parted lips and eyes fixed in rapt attention. It was as if he strove to hear some voice from a long way off. At last he spoke again.

'I cannot help you any more. I know of my own experience nothing but what I have told you, and you will not receive that. Yet you must not despair. In the end, if you are brave, you will walk with Him.'

I have no doubt that there are ways in which He gives Himself to men of which I do not know. I offered you one, a sure way, a simple way—the only sure and simple way. You could not have gone astray or lost yourself on it. Well, you will not go on it. Nevertheless, you will find Him. It may be after much wandering in stony places, lonely and desolate. But I am quite sure that you will find Him in the end.'

From far off along the road came the noise of a horse's hoofs and the rattle of a car. The air was so still that the voices of the men who sat on the car and talked were plainly audible. It came nearer, and at last stopped opposite the old tower where Benedict and Father O'Meara stood together. Someone leaped from it, and his feet clattered on the road.

'It is a man returning from the market,' said the priest, 'who means to walk to the village across the sand. The tide is at dead ebb. He can do it easily.'

A tall man climbed awkwardly over the wall, and made his way across the grass towards the old tower. He was still young, but he stooped and walked slowly, his long arms hanging motionless by his sides. He wore a battered soft felt hat, a loose, ill-fitting coat, once black, now almost green from long exposure to salt-laden air and sea-spray. He might have been a poor fisherman clad in some second-hand slop suit. To Benedict, trembling with emotion after his conversation with the priest, this chance stranger was of little interest.

Then Father O'Meara said: 'This is Hyacinth Conneally, the Protestant minister of Carrowkeel.'

Benedict was indifferent. Only it annoyed him a little that the priest should step forward with outstretched hand. Greetings in Irish passed between the two clergymen. Father O'Meara began to speak eagerly, quickly, still in Irish. Benedict knew that he himself was the subject of the talk, because now and then both men glanced at him. He grew curious and watched. The moon had risen, and now shone bright and clear above the hills. By its light he

could plainly see the face of Hyacinth Conneally. It was weatherbeaten, brown, and rough—the face of a man who went often upon the sea. There was also in it a look of extraordinary gentleness and patience. Then while the priest spoke a sudden light came into the eyes. The priest's story was interrupted with quick, earnest questions. The whole face grew strangely eager. The man's body straightened; his head drooped no more, but was thrown back upon his shoulders. A mighty energy, like the outcome of vehement passion, took possession of the slouched figure and gentle face.

Then before Benedict was aware Hyacinth Conneally came to him and spoke.

‘You have asked Father O'Meara how you are to find Jesus Christ. He has told you, but you are unwilling to do as he bids. Did he speak to you as the Benedictine Serenus de Cressy spoke to John Inglesant? Was that the way he showed you, which you refused?’

He looked long and eagerly at Benedict, as if he strove to read his mind, to see the very nature of his soul. Then he spoke again.

‘No, I think not. If he had told you of that way, that very hard way, I think you might have listened to him and obeyed. I do not know you, but I can guess that for you a great sacrifice would not be a repellent but an attractive thing. He did not tell you of that way, but of some other, and now, still dissatisfied, you ask me how you are to find Him.’

Benedict had not asked the question of this man, but he waited for an answer, and there came on him a conviction that there would be an answer—like Father O'Meara's, the expression of actual experience, and yet different from what his had been.

‘Do you not know that desiring to find Jesus you already have found Him? That your request is meaningless? You wish to know Him; therefore you do know Him.’

‘That is not true,’ said Benedict. ‘I wish, I long

passionately to know Him, and I do not know Him. There is no use your saying to me that I know Him when I don't.'

'Listen. "How am I to find Jesus?" That is your question, is it not? It becomes a foolish question once you have asked it. You who want to know Him should be asking, "How can I help finding Jesus?" Look round you now. See the mysterious smooth outlines of the hills, how they are silver in the moonlight and black where the shadow falls. See the flat sand and the gleam of the ocean beyond. Look round you to-morrow. See the sunlight on the gorse and on the green grass. Feel the warmth of summer and the fresh sea-breeze on your face. You cannot fail to find Jesus if you want Him. Or go into the cabins where the people live, and the fields where they work. Learn what the lives of our men and women are. See their toil and the pain they suffer, and the wrong that comes on them and all who live. See their patience and their love. Talk to them, know them, and you have found Jesus. How can you miss finding Jesus? Go into your own room, and close the shutters and the door. Shut out the sunlight and the voices of your fellow-men; shut yourself away alone. Yet there will rise in you thoughts of great things, desires of doing well, of serving something, someone not yourself. There is Jesus. You cannot escape from Him.'

'That is enough,' said Benedict. 'I am trying to understand. Give me time. Perhaps I shall find Jesus before I die. The desire of serving something not myself, you said. I am to find Him there. Well, I am going to serve Ireland. Is that enough?'

'Ah! Ireland!' said Hyacinth. 'It seems to me easier to know Jesus than to serve Ireland. Yet I think that they who know Him will be best able to serve Ireland. And there are some, a few, one or two here and there, who want to serve. But the way of service is obscure. Who will show us any good for Ireland? It is not easy to serve her.'

While Hyacinth spoke Father O'Meara stood a little apart. He listened, saying nothing. Now, from his place under the shadow of the broken wall, he spoke.

'It is not easy, but all the more for that we ought to try. What have we got to do with easy tasks? Does a brave man care to spend himself in play with no danger and little toil in it? The good and the glory of Ireland are hard to work for. But if her cause were utterly lost, if no one in the whole land but our three selves cared at all for her, yet must not we three go on and work? We have been speaking, all of us, of the friendship of Jesus. Was there ever a defeat more hopeless to look at than the cross on Calvary? Was there ever a cause more irretrievably lost than His was then? Yet Easter came. And Ireland is not as He was. Her own have not all forsaken her and fled. You have lived too long here in a corner, Hyacinth Conneally, alone with your misty sea-dreams and your old despair. Open your eyes and see. There are men and women, young and brave and strong. They are everywhere, some here, some there. And they are beginning to come together. They are clasping hands and singing a great song as they march. Oh, the brave hearts that love Ireland more than all! Oh, the good noise of many feet upon the pavements and the roads! Oh, the glowing Irish faces and the hair of men and women blown free by the strong wind from off the deep—the very breath of the living God!'

'See,' said Hyacinth, 'we must be going, Father O'Meara, or we shall not get across the sand to-night. The tide has turned. Perhaps it turned an hour ago, but I did not see it until now.'

He paused and smiled gently. His eyes were full of a wonderful tenderness as he repeated slowly: 'The tide has turned, but my face was not towards it; I did not know that it had turned till just now.'

Benedict stood watching them as they crossed the bay. It was easy to distinguish their figures even at a distance. Hyacinth Conneally was the taller of the

two, but he stooped as he walked, taking long slow steps. Father O'Meara, a smaller man, walked firmly, briskly, it seemed more quickly; but the two reached the further shore together.

Benedict still stood gazing at the bay which lay clear in the moonlight. Far out he saw a long white line of water, and behind it the dark sea drawing in—the clean salt sea, drawing irresistibly in to flood the basin at his feet. Already the whole stretch of the sand was wet, and broad pools lay upon the surface of it—pools that had not been there before. Now they were everywhere to be seen. They were small and separated far from each other; but they were growing larger. The foremost wave of the flowing tide had not reached them. The water in them was not from it, but had risen mysteriously, oozing through the sand. There seemed no reason why a pool should be in one spot and not in another, here rather than there, for the whole strand was level. Yet the pools appeared, some of them near the coming tide, some far up beside the dark belt of stones. They gleamed in the moonlight, pools of silver water, still, with no ripples on them. But they spread, steadily conquering yard by yard of the moist sand. Now one and another of them, spreading, touched, kissed, joined, were made one, and afterwards spread more swiftly still. They took strength from their union, and courage from a sense that the great ocean itself was coming to their aid.

Benedict turned at last, and went back along the road. He knew that in a few hours the whole bay would be full. The sun would rise and shine. The waves would dance and flash and leap and break, glittering, shimmering, laughing with glee and irrepressible gladness right up to the extreme verges of the land.



BIRMINGHAM, G.A.

Benedict

K. ... gh.

